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By **W. C. TUTTLE**

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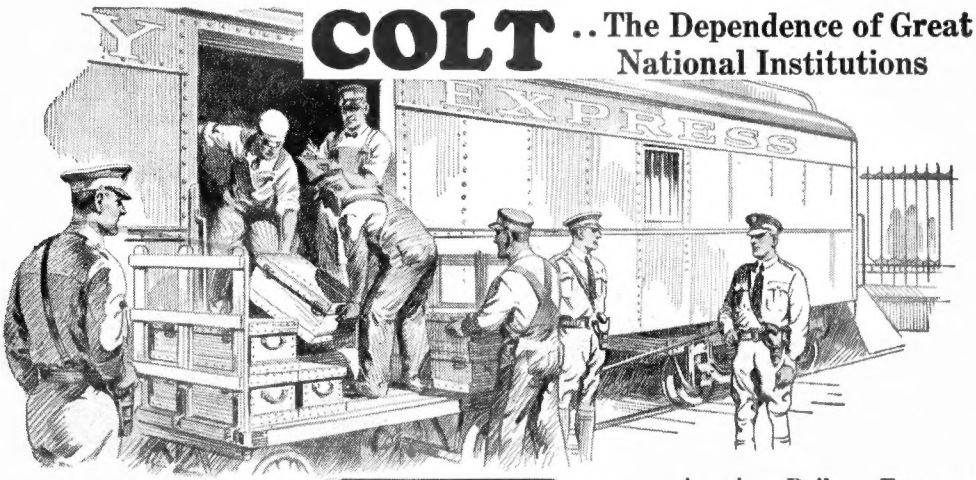

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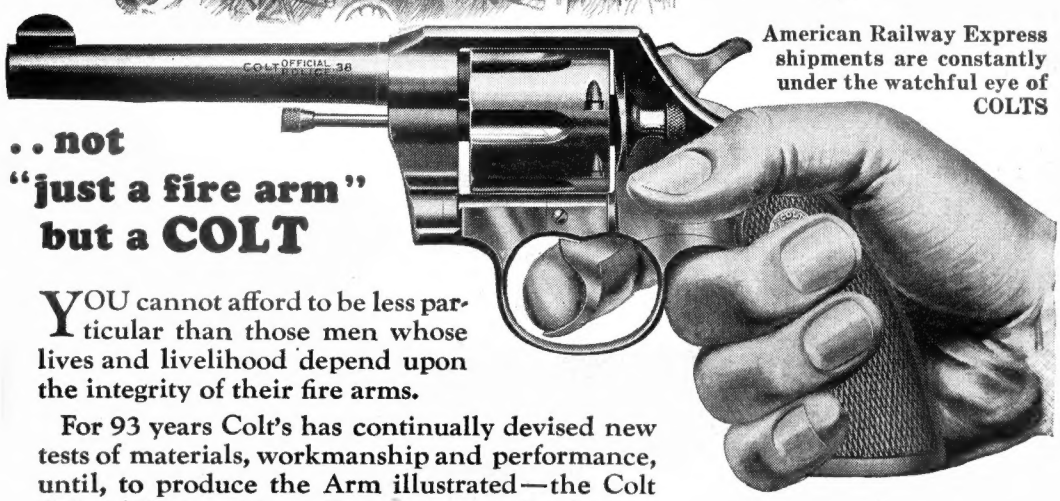

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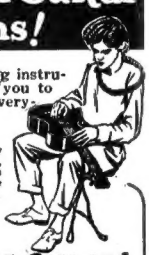

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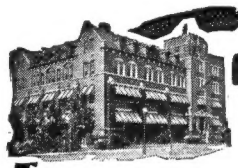

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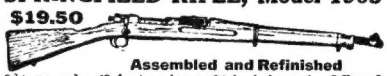

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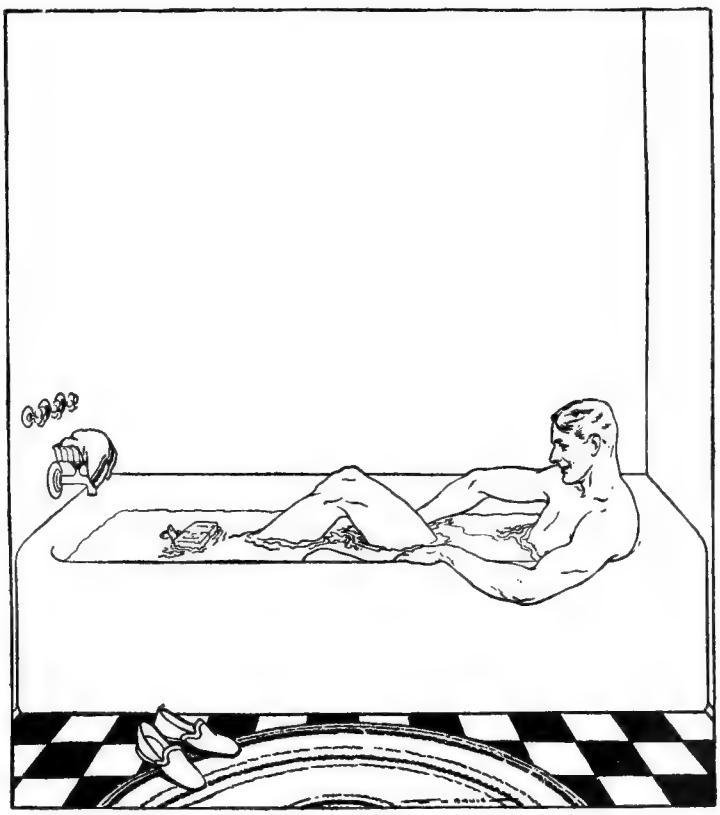

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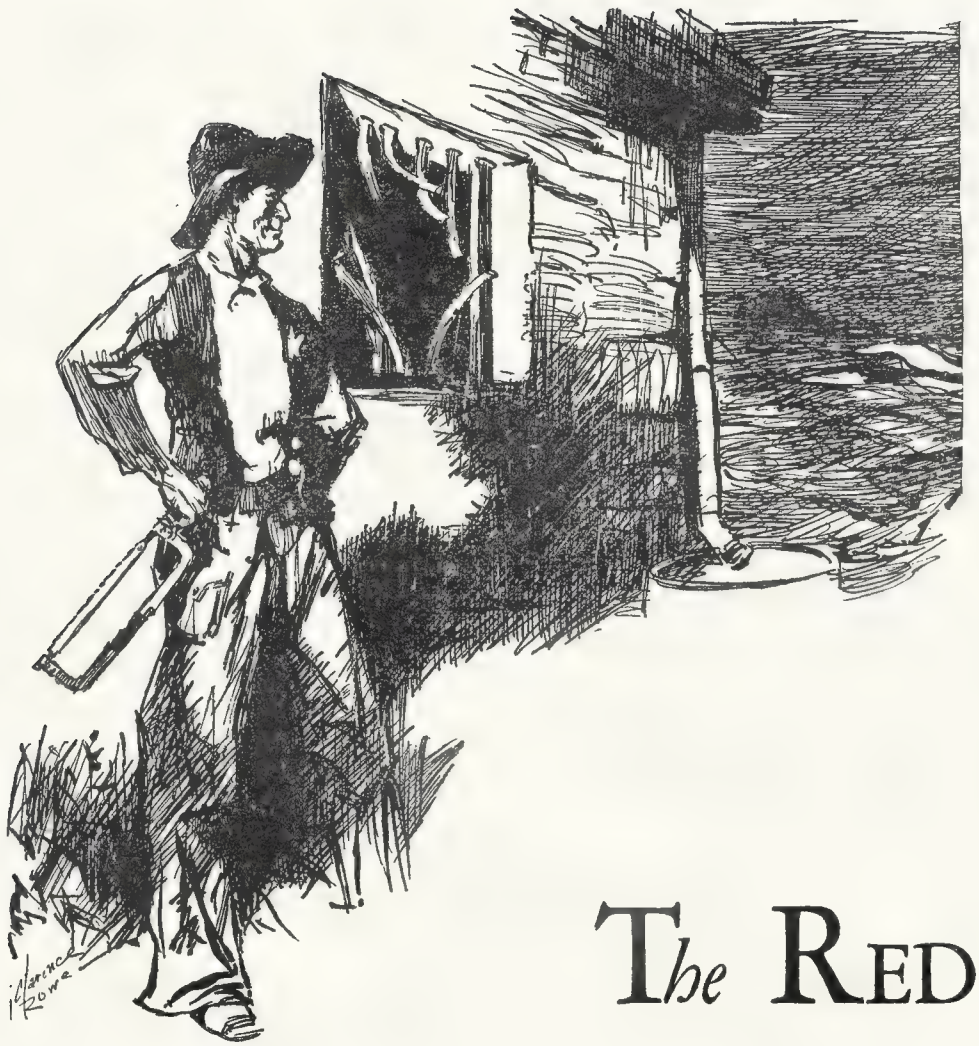


The Red

CHAPTER I

THE REDHEAD SETS A PRECEDENT

"HANGED by the neck until you are dead—and may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

Old Judge Wetherby's voice broke on the last word, but he shut his lips tightly, swallowed thickly, and blinked around the court room like an old owl suddenly awakened in broad daylight. It was the first time in his life that he had ever been obliged to pronounce the sentence of death.

There was not another sound in the court room. It was as if a creaky old phonograph were talking in a deserted house. One could almost imagine the scratching of the needle, but it was only one of the judge's cuff links scraping on the old desk top.

Silent Slade, the prisoner, towering six feet four inches, stood facing the old judge, a giant, with somber brown eyes in a huge face, looking at the little old man who had doomed him to die. Not a

Beginning

W. C. TUTTLE'S

Thrilling New Novel of Brick Davidson

DEVIL *from* SUN DOG

muscle twitched in the big man's face as he turned his head and looked at the crowded court room, but he was seeing the crowd through a haze.

Just behind Silent Slade stood Brick Davidson, the sheriff of Sun Dog County. Brick was of medium height, wiry of build, with a thatch of flaming red hair. His thin face was plentifully sprinkled with freckles, but he was so pale now that they did not show. Brick looked old and drawn—a tired old man at thirty years of age.

The law had decreed that his best friend must die; and he—Brick Davidson, sheriff—must perform the execution. He did not look at Silent. He wondered how in the world the pit of his stomach could get so far away from him. One time he had gone down fifteen stories in a swift elevator, and the feeling was almost the same. Suddenly he was conscious of the booming voice of Silent Slade, a decided contrast to the rasping, high pitched voice of the old judge.

"Well, pardner, I reckon we might as well go back and finish that seven up game."

Brick looked up quickly. Silent had turned and was looking at him, a whimsical smile on his wide mouth. It broke the tension of the court room. Men began to shuffle their feet as they walked out, looking back at the red headed sheriff and his condemned prisoner. The old judge hurried out, walking in short, jerky steps. Women stopped in the doorway and looked back. One woman was crying. She was Mrs. Cale Wesson, a big, motherly sort of person.

She loved both Brick and Silent in a motherly way; she had known them for years.

"As if your tears would do any good," said a woman.

Mrs. Wesson turned and went down the stairs. Brick put his hand on Silent's arm and they went down the back stairs and around to the little jail.

"Want to play now?" asked Brick hoarsely.

Silent shook his head.

"I reckon I'd rather set down and think for a while, pardner."

"Damn it, I don't want to think," said Brick savagely, striking the bars with an open palm. "I don't never want to think ag'in."

"Well, you've got more time than I have. You can wait."

"Rub it in," said Brick. "Ain'tcha got no feelin's, Silent?"

"You're funny," sighed Silent. "You act almost as though you was the one who was goin' to git hanged."

"I'd jist as soon. By God, I'd rather!"

Brick turned and walked down the narrow corridor, where he entered his office.

SOAPY CASWELL, a typical old cattleman, as gray as a badger and with a hair trigger disposition, was tilted back against the wall, his boot heels hooked over a rung. Soapy was a big man in Sun Dog. He was a county commissioner, owned the Marlin City Bank, was heavily interested in the banks at Silverton and Redrock, and also owned the Circle Cross ranch.

Soapy was keen, had plenty of money, and was beginning to be a power in politics. He had watched Brick Davidson grow up in Sun Dog, and he was personally interested in seeing Brick go beyond what county politics could offer.

Brick had been a top hand cowboy before he became sheriff. He was a square shooter, a fighter; a born leader, unless Soapy was mistaken. There had never been any affection between Soapy and Brick. They quarreled very often, and Soapy liked Brick for his independence.

Brick tossed his hat on a desk and sat down wearily. Soapy squinted at him, but said nothing for a while. Finally he cleared his throat.

"How'd you like to go to the state senate, Brick?" he asked.

Brick looked at him, but did not answer. In fact, he hardly heard what Soapy had said.

"I've been thinkin' it over," Soapy. "The election ain't more than three months away. You've made a good sheriff—a danged good one. You've made a lot of friends; friends that'll back you in anythin'. I'd like to see you nominated for the state senate. It's a steppin' stone. You've got to git before the public, Brick. I'll betcha that if you do go to the senate, it won't be more'n four years before you'll carry this state for United States Senate. You're a fighter. The Lord knows this state needs a fighter."

Soapy stopped to let his words soak in.

"Were you in the court house?" asked Brick.

"Yeah, I was there."

"Then you ought to know how much I'm interested in you, Soapy."

"That's the risk you took when you accepted that office—havin' to hang your friends. I like Silent, but that ain't got a thing to do with it. Silent murdered a man."

"Did he?" asked Brick wearily.

"Twelve men said he did. They was only out fifteen minutes. If I'd 'a' been on that jury, they'd 'a' been hung yet. Where's Harp?"

Harp Harris was Brick's deputy. He was six feet two inches tall, thin as a rail, with a long, lean face that registered deep despair most of the time.

"Harp's sufferin' from tonsilitis and he's home with his wife," said Brick dully. "And he's also a damn' liar. He don't even know where his tonsils are. All's the matter with him is that he didn't want to be in the court house this mornin'. Della came down and told me about it. She said he was sufferin'. I s'pose he was; so was I."

"It makes a tough job for you," said Soapy. "But you won't resign."

"How do you know I won't?"

"Because I know you, Brick."

"I'm the kind of a feller who'd hang a friend, eh?"

"You're the kind of a man who obeys the letter of the law."

"You better get to hell out of here before I kick you out, Soapy."

"You and what other six big men?"

Brick shook his head despondently.

"Soapy, I want to do the right thing. Could you hang your best friend? Me and Silent have bunked together, rode together, fought together. We've split fifty-fifty on everythin'. Silent is as square as a dollar. I don't care a damn what that jury said. Silent told me he never did shoot Scotty McKee, and I believe him. I'm no judge nor jury, of course. And now I've got to hang him. Got to trip that damn' trap and—and murder my best friend."

"Hangin' ain't murder, Brick."

"It's legal murder."

"All right, I never made the law, and I don't believe in it any more than you do. Now that we've settled all that, how do you feel about runnin' for the state senate?"

"No money in it."

"That's plenty true—but it advertises you. Listen to me. I've got money. I've got friends who have money. There's certain things that this state needs, and it'll take national legislation to get them. We need a man with guts enough to go after it, *sabe?* There's a machine in this state that needs bustin', and we're startin' in to forge a monkey wrench to throw into their cog wheels.

"The state senate don't pay you much, but here's what I'll do. I'll make you foreman of the Circle Cross, with time off to be a senator. Think it over, Brick. I ain't said a word to anybody—yet. But I can swing a lot of money over to my way of thinkin'. Damn it, I want to make somethin' out of you."

"Why?"

"I knowed you'd ask that. Mebbe I've got an ax to grind. Mebbe you'd make a lot of money for me. And mebbe it's because I never had any son of my own. I'm gettin' old, Brick—old and foolish. I'd like to see you go high in the world—and know I helped you there."

Soapy tilted forward in his chair, got to his feet, and walked outside without saying anything more.

"Danged old pelican," breathed Brick softly, as he sagged forward, holding his head in his hands.

He wanted to think—and it was not about Soapy and his plans. Think. That was all he had been doing since the day he had been forced to arrest Silent Slade for the murder of Scotty McKee.

SCOTTY McKEE had come to Marlin City a year previous to his murder, and had purchased the Nine Bar Nine cattle outfit from Lafe Freeman. McKee paid cash, and old Lafe had retired to a single room in the Marlin City hotel, where he could sit all day on a sidewalk, whittle, chew tobacco and play a little poker.

Little was known about McKee, except that he came from somewhere down along the Mexican Border. He had been on the ranch about two months, when his daughter came from school in San Francisco and joined him. She was twenty years of age—a tall, dark eyed girl—and had turned the head of Silent Slade, who had never had a girl before.

McKee was a silent sort of person, sticking fairly close to work and rarely

coming to town. Juanita was a good dancer, and was so much in demand that Silent was often plunged into the depths of despair. She told Silent that her mother had been a Spaniard.

She and her father talked Spanish together, which caused Silent to purchase a Spanish-English dictionary. He threw it away in a few days, after Juanita promised to teach him the language.

Six months after Juanita came to Marlin City, Silent went to work for her father. He and Banty Harrison were the only help employed, as Scotty McKee was able to do much of his own work. Silent was in the seventh heaven. It gave him a chance to be near Juanita.

There had never been any engagement, but Silent took it for granted that Juanita would marry him. But Scotty McKee evidently had different plans for Juanita, and he told her so in no uncertain terms. She told Silent what her father had said, and he decided to settle the issue by a single handed debate with McKee.

It was on a Saturday, when Scotty ordered Banty to hitch up the buggy team and take Juanita to Silverton to do some shopping. He told Silent to take the day off if he wanted to—which he did. Juanita decided to do her shopping in Marlin City, which gave Banty a good opportunity to quench his thirst, while Silent took care of Juanita.

There was nothing wrong in this. A woman is privileged to change her mind as often as she wishes—and Juanita was a woman. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when Juanita decided to go home, and strangely enough, Banty was still able to drive a team.

Silent rode away ahead of them, determined to have it out with Scotty McKee before Juanita came back to the ranch. And that was where Silent Slade made a mistake. He testified on the witness stand that he rode to the ranch, and that he thought he heard a shot fired while he was at the stable putting up his horse.

He said he went to the front of the door house and found it locked. Then he went around the west side of the house, where he found a window open. He heard somebody moving around in there, decided that it was McKee, and went back to the front door. He knocked heavily, but there was no response.

Then he sat down on the porch. He said he had no suspicion of anything wrong. There were a number of calves in the big corral, ready for the branding iron, and as he sat there on the porch, a coyote crossed an open spot below the corral. He said he drew out his six-shooter and fired a shot at the coyote, which caused the animal to leave that vicinity at top speed.

He did not see Juanita and Banty nearing the ranch, but went back to the open window, wondering where Scotty McKee might be. Finally he crawled through the window, and he said there was a decided odor of burned powder. In the living room of the ranch house he found Scotty McKee, lying on his face in the middle of the room, shot through the heart.

Silent said he turned McKee over and examined him. Banty testified that he knocked on the front door, but Silent says he never heard it. And then, rather dazed by the tragedy, Silent went back to the open window and crawled out of the house, instead of unlocking the front door. Both Juanita and Banty saw him crawling out.

THE PROSECUTION based their case on three facts: Scotty McKee had never had any trouble with any one in Sun Dog County. He had refused to sanction the marriage of Juanita and Silent Slade, and Silent had gone out there looking for a showdown. And Silent had crawled through a window, getting away from the scene of the crime, instead of going out through the door.

Juanita refused to testify, except at the coroner's inquest, where she was still too dazed to understand what the public thought about it. Banty testified to the facts as he knew them—Silent had told

him he was going out to have a showdown with Scotty McKee. This did not help Silent any. The shot at the coyote, whether mythical or not, helped the prosecution. Silent had neglected to remove the empty cartridge from his gun, and McKee had been shot with the same caliber revolver as the one used by Silent Slade.

Silent stuck doggedly to his first story, and all the efforts of the prosecution failed to change it in any way. Juanita was heartbroken over the affair and stayed close to the ranch. Brick had worked on the case from every angle, trying to find some clue which might help his friend.

Juanita seemed to know little about her father's business. He had kept her in school, supplied her with money, and she had never really become acquainted with him until they came to the Sun Dog country.

On the day that Scotty McKee had been shot, Brick found two things at the ranch house near the body. One was an old envelope partly covered with penciled figures, addressed to Jim Breen, Gomez Springs, Mexico. The other was a Bull Durham tobacco sack containing a little marihuana weed. Brick did not know what the stuff was, until he sent it to a drug company for analysis.

Marihuana is really a Mexican product, although it is grown secretly in places in the southwest. The dried leaves are mixed with tobacco in cigarets. Its use apparently destroys the smoker's ideas of right and wrong, and an overdose is said to be conducive to homicide. Scotty McKee had been a big, husky sort of man, who drank but little and smoked none.

Brick knew that Banty Harrison did not own the stuff, nor did Silent Slade. Brick asked Juanita about the name on the envelope, but she did not know any Jim Breen. But she did know that the penciled figures on the envelope had not been made by her father.

Juanita did not know where her father had made his money. He had told her a little of a cattle ranch near the Border, but had mentioned no names or places—and that Border is around fourteen hundred miles in length.

Brick had talked with the prosecutor about the envelope and the marihuana weed; but the prosecutor was little interested. He was looking for a conviction, not clues to ruin his case. The court appointed a lawyer from Silverton to defend Silent, but as a defense it was a mere matter of form. Silent had one story to tell, and the jury did not believe it.

Brick's mind was wandering back over the evidence, when Harp Harris, his deputy, came slowly into the office. Harp's long neck was encompassed in a red woolen sock, which sagged away from his prominent Adam's apple and gave off an unmistakable odor of liniment.

"How'd he stand it?" asked Harp huskily. Brick looked up at him.

"Who do you mean?"

"Silent."

"Oh," softly. "I didn't know you was interested."

"You know that's a lie, Brick. I've been awful sick, I tell you. Della didn't want me to come out now. Damn it, she's settin' around the house bawlin' right now."

"About you comin' out in the open with a sock on the wrong end of you?"

"No—about what they're goin' to do to Silent."

"What they're goin' to, eh? Didja stop to think that *they* are me and you, Harp? That's our job."

"Not me. I resign right now."

"No you won't. You quit me now, and I'll make a widow out of your wife. Harp, I think I'll resign and make you sheriff."

"Make me—" An expression of panic flashed across Harp's lean face.

"No you don't. Nossir. Don't do that. I'll resign if you do."

"You'd make a good sheriff for Sun Dog."

"Shore I would, unless somethin' serious came up before I could git my resignation wrote out."

"I guess we're a hell of a pair of officers," sighed Brick.

"I dunno about you—but I'm offerin' no defense for my end of it. I reckon I'll go back and talk with Silent."

"Go ahead. You're about as cheerful as an undertaker. If I was goin' to git hung, I'd welcome you, Harp. That expression on your face would make most anythin' welcome."

"I tell you, I'm sick."

"So am I, but I don't need any sock around my neck."

Brick left the office and walked up to the bank, where he wrote out a check for a hundred dollars and cashed it. When he left there he met the prosecuting attorney.

"I suppose you know that the county allows you enough money to employ two additional deputies until after the execution," he said. "In a case of this kind it is customary to keep the prisoner under constant surveillance."

Brick nodded slowly.

"I'll pick me a couple men tomorrow."

"Be sure and get men you can trust, Sheriff. Slade is well liked."

"I realize that."

"Makes it rather difficult for you, I guess."

"Oh, I'll get along."

"Certainly you will. This is really a supreme test of a man's nerve."

Brick looked queerly at him, but did not reply. In front of the office he met Harp.

"Didja have a nice visit with Silent?" asked Brick.

"Fine," said Harp thickly. "I said, 'Hello, Silent,' and he said, 'Hello, Harp,' and then we set there and looked at each other. After while I says, 'So long, Silent,' and he says, 'So long, Harp.' Yea, it was a fine visit. How do I go about quittin' my job?"

"Better wait a while," advised Brick. "You've got a wife to support, and you don't want to go back to forty a month, do you?"

"Della said I ort to quit."

"Ask her to subtract forty from a hundred and ten and see the difference. And you might not be able to even get a job punchin' cows at forty a month. And if anythin' happened to me, you'd be the sheriff and draw about three hundred a month."

"You ain't figurin' on anythin' happenin' to you, are you?"

"In the midst of life, we are in death," grinned Brick.

"That's right—you never can tell. Lincoln's dead and Washington's dead—and I don't feel so damn' well m'self. Well, I'll go and gurgle m' neck some more. You won't need me no more today, will you?"

"Didn't need you at all, as far as that's concerned."

"Thank you kindly. I'll be all right tomorrow, Brick."

"You may be well, but you'll never be all right."

IT WAS a part of Harp's duties to feed prisoners. Brick was eating his breakfast in the little restaurant the following morning, when he came in, half running in his haste, carrying his hat in his hand.

"The jail has been busted!" he blurted. "Silent's gone!"

Brick quickly got to his feet. There were a number of men in the restaurant, and they all left their meals to follow down to the jail. Word spread quickly that Silent Slade had escaped, and the curious came to see how the jail break had been accomplished.

Five of the bars had been cut through and bent aside. Once in the corridor, it was easy enough for the prisoner to get out of the main building, as the doors were locked with a spring. Harp also discovered that Brick's horse and saddle were missing, and that Silent's six shooter had been taken from a drawer of the sheriff's desk, along with a full box of cartridges.

The prosecuting attorney had been advised of the escape, and was down there within a few minutes, examining the cut bars. Sun Dog County's jail was of an ancient vintage and the bars, instead of

being tempered steel, were rather soft iron.

The prosecuting attorney looked the cuts over critically. He even shut the door of the cell and tried to crawl out through the twisted bars.

"Rather queer," he observed to the crowd. "Slade is a much larger man than I am, and it is impossible for me to get out. Do any of you know whether Slade was right or left handed?"

"Right handed," said Harp quickly.

"That's strange. If you will notice closely, these bars have all been cut from the left side, and the cut had a downward tendency. It is easy to prove from which side the cut was made, as the last fraction of an inch of the bar is broken off, not sawed. Either Slade is left handed or those bars were cut from outside."

The attorney turned and looked squarely at Brick.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

Not a muscle of Brick's face moved, and his eyes were level as he looked at the lawyer.

"I might ask the county to replace them bars with steel ones. It will make it easier for the man who gets my job."

Brick turned on his heel and went to his office, where he sat down and wrote out his resignation. The crowd filed out through the office, leaving Harp and Brick together.

"Did that maverick mean to insinuate that you turned Silent loose?" asked Harp angrily. "If he did, I'll—"

"Keep your shirt on," advised Brick.

He finished writing, placed the letter in an envelope, and addressed it to the commissioners of Sun Dog County.

"Take this over to the court house," he ordered Harp. "I've advised that you be sworn in at once so that you can get on the trail of Silent Slade."

"Brick, you ain't resignin'?"

"Yeah, I've resigned. You see, I never thought about Silent bein' right handed, and I never thought about him not bein' able to crawl out through the bars."

"Hey, Brick. What's all this I'm hearin'?"

Soapy Caswell stumbled through the doorway.

"Some of them danged fools said—" He stopped for breath.

"Said that you—you let Silent Slade get away."

"I heard that's what they're sayin', Soapy. I've just written out my resignation."

"You've written— Brick, are you goin' to let them loud mouthed jiggers get away with anythin' like that? You never let him loose. They said that the bars was sawed. My God, what do they want? Brick, you can't do this. With the reputation you've got—and what's ahead of you. Why don'tcha say somethin'?"

"Would you mind deliverin' that letter, Harp?"

"Oh, shore."

Harp went away, shaking his head.

"Do a little talkin'," urged Soapy.

"I haven't anythin' to say. I reckon you've heard it all, anyway."

"Brick, you're ruined, as far as politics are concerned. This story will go everywhere. Sheriff's bunkie sentenced to hang and is turned loose by the sheriff. My God, can you imagine how that will look to folks?"

"I thought it all out, Soapy."

"You gave him a horse and saddle and his gun."

"And a hundred dollars for expenses," said Brick calmly. "He's got to eat."

"You're a hell of a sheriff."

"I know it—and I'm sorry, Soapy. The prosecutin' attorney is mad enough to eat spikes. Dang him, he got his conviction. What more does he want?"

"Does he know you've resigned?"

"Prob'ly does by this time."

Soapy chuckled softly for a moment.

"He'll shore raise the roof when he finds that you've resigned."

"Why?"

"Because I bet him a hundred dollars yesterday that you'd never hang Silent Slade. I'm goin' up and collect. See you later, Brick."

Harp came back from the court house.

He had not found any of the commissioners in, but he left the letter where they would find it.

"I'm pullin' out tonight," Brick told him. "You might do a little huntin' for Silent, if they make you sheriff. And after a few days you might find my horse and saddle."

"Might find 'em where?"

"Oh, most any place in the county. Right now, they're in your stable. If I never come back, they're yours, Harp. Silent caught a freight train out of here last night."

"Where's he goin'?"

"I didn't ask him."

AT FIVE o'clock that afternoon Brick's resignation was still unopened on the commissioner's desk, and Brick was packing his few belongings. The prosecuting attorney was mad. He had paid the hundred dollars to Soapy Caswell, who was gloating considerably; but he was not mad about the money.

"A lovely state of affairs," he snorted. "Murderer at large in the hills, turned loose by the sheriff, and nobody looking for him. Can you imagine such a thing. Brick Davidson should go to jail for this."

"Can you prove he turned Slade loose?" asked Soapy.

"Prove it! How can I prove it? Those bars have been turned in their sockets until no man could prove from which side they had been cut; and they've been bent back far enough to allow any man to crawl through."

"But you had witnesses to how they looked this mornin'."

"Did I? Well, I thought I did, until I questioned some of them. Fine state of affairs. He's probably had twenty hours in which to make his escape, and no warnings have been sent out. This county is without a sheriff, Mr. Caswell. For two cents I'd resign myself."

"Well," drawled Soapy, "I'll take up a collection if you really feel thataway."

"Oh, you know what I mean."

"Shore."

Soapy Caswell and Harp Harris were the only ones who knew that Brick was leaving Marlin City that evening. Soapy tried to give Brick the hundred dollars he had won from the lawyer, but Brick said he had plenty of money. He and Harp shook hands silently and solemnly.

"Will you ever come back?" asked Harp, as the train began moving.

"Some day, Harp. Goodby, Soapy."

"When you come back, bring 'em both with you," said Soapy.

"Both what, Soapy?"

"Silent Slade and the man who shot Scotty McKee."

Brick grinned back at them, but his heart was heavy as he watched the old town fade in the distance. He had lived nearly all his life in Sun Dog County. His mother had died when he was ten years of age, and two years later his father died. He had been christened Arthur William Davidson, but his thatch of brick red hair had ruined Arthur William shortly after his christening.

Thrown on the world at twelve years of age, he picked up with a trail herd heading for Montana, eventually landing in Sun Dog. And, except for a few outside trips, Brick had been in Sun Dog ever since the day he had come into the valley, trailing in the dust of a herd.

Sun Dog had never known a better sheriff than Brick Davidson. He had plenty of bullet scars to show that the job had been no sinecure. But now he had violated his oath of office; betrayed the law he had sworn to uphold.

Brick sighed deeply as he watched the sunset fading across the Sun Dog hills. In his pocket was a ticket to San Francisco. Just why San Francisco, he did not know, except that he had always wanted to see the old gray town on Golden Gate. The conductor interrupted his reveries.

"Takin' a trip for your health, Sheriff?"

Brick looked up quickly, recognized the conductor, and smiled thinly.

"I reckon that's what it amounts to, Carlin."

"Goin' to Frisco, eh?" looking at the

strip of ticket. "Well, that's fine. Just takin' a vacation, or are you goin' after a prisoner?"

"I can't tell you—yet."

"Well, good luck to you."

"Thanks. I'll need plenty of it."

CHAPTER II

JIM BREEN

IN DAYS gone by, the Rancho del Rosa was known far and wide in the Border country. Don Enrique Maxwell, loved and respected by every one from sandaled friar to booted bandit, ruled the thousands of acres where his cattle roamed. Those who traveled El Camino Real found a welcome at the Rancho del Rosa, and no questions were ever asked. Don Enrique lived with an open hand, thanking God for his many many blessings, and the chance to help those in need.

His wife was a tall, stately Spanish woman—a daughter of the Dons—and a fit mate for Don Enrique, who was born an Englishman. They had one son, christened Roberto, a wild riding young devil who inherited the rancho when his father and mother had gone the way of all flesh. He married a Mexican girl and proceeded to spend money faster than he made it.

The gambling tables called to Bob Maxwell, and he answered the call until his acres dwindled, his wife died, and the huge herds of cattle and horses faded away. Twenty years had passed since the rancho had descended to Bob Maxwell. Marie, his only child, was nearly nineteen, a tall, lithe, dark skinned beauty, educated in a Catholic school at San Francisco. She had been home less than a year, and Bob Maxwell was just beginning to realize that he had a daughter.

The buildings of the Rancho del Rosa—the ranch of the roses—were very old, built with thick adobe walls. There were deep windows and flagged walks, worn by boots of *caballeros*, and the bare feet of Indians. Ivy covered the broad walls of the patio, mingling with the huge climbing roses, which almost made a bower of the place. In the center of the patio was the well, with a wide, low curb. Wide arches, gated with wrought iron, led from the patio to the outside.

It was only two miles to that mythical line which divided the United States from the land of *mañana*, unmarked except for an occasional monument. Three miles below the line, almost due south of the rancho, was the town of Gomez Springs.

About two miles west of the rancho was the town of Sicomoro. It was more Mexican than American, with its adobe structures and weathered balconies, where guitars tinkled in the evenings. There were no sidewalks, and the majority of of the signs were inscribed in Spanish.

THE BORDER patrol had little use for Sicomoro, and Sicomoro seemed to have little use for the Border patrol. The people of Sicomoro were close mouthed. They told nothing. The Border patrol swore that every man in Sicomoro was either a smuggler or a hijacker. Perhaps this was a bit exaggerated, but there had been many killings around Sicomoro, and no man had ever been brought to justice for any of them.

The Chinese population of the town fluctuated badly. At times there were only the scant dozen of regular residents, and again there might be a dozen extras. But they always left ahead of the patrol, heading north. The several *cantinas* in Sicomoro did a good business in both liquor and gambling. Easy money goes quickly. Edward Pico, a swarthy son of the south, owned the liquor and gambling houses, while Wong Hop, a keen, slant eyed Cantonese, bossed the Oriental end of the town.

It was hot down there in Sicomoro at noontime. A lone rider, tall, swarthy, slightly overdressed, rode in on a big sorrel and tied the animal in front of the Solo Encinas *cantina*. No one knew just

why it was called the lone oak, because there was no oak.

The sunlight glistened on his silver mounted saddle as the animal shifted about in the yellow dust. The rider was Joe Pico, a cousin of Edward Pico. He spent much of his time in Gomez Springs. The Border patrol was deeply suspicious of Joe. He was apparently a leading light in Gomez Springs.

Joe accepted a drink from the bartender, and sat down at a table where three men and a dealer were playing stud poker. Joe was evidently not in the best frame of mind. He threw some silver on the table and accepte ! his chips. The playing was desultory, and little money changed hands. There was no conversation. Flies buzzed around the players.

A man came in and the players glanced casually at him. It was Brick Davidson, down at the heels, dusty, unshaven, but still able to grin at the world. It was two months since Brick had left Sun Dog. His blue suit was stained and a mass of wrinkles, his shirt long since ready for a laundry, or a ragbag, and his hat out of shape. Inside the waistband of his pants he carried a Colt revolver. He was very hot and very dusty, grateful for the coolness of the adobe *cantina*, with its odor of liquor and stale beer.

"*Buenas dias*," greeted the bartender.

"Yeah, I guess so," grinned Brick, leaning against the bar. "I ain't sure what it means, but that's all right, pardner."

"Have a drink?"

"I shore *sabe* that," grinned Brick. "Got any cold water? Yeah—water. The stuff that makes 'em build bridges. Not cold? What do you folks drink down here when you're thirsty?"

"Mebbe some tequila."

"Not with me. I drank some of that stuff about forty miles back in a town one night. I had six drinks and woke up with five policemen on me."

"Did they put you in jail?"

"Five policemen?" Brick grinned scornfully. "And me with six drinks of to-kill-you inside? They did not. I shucked the last one off me two miles from town. No, thank you—no to-kill-you. What have we here?"

Brick walked over to the poker table and watched a few deals. He wanted to get into that game, but his finances were down to one silver dollar. Finally he addressed the dealer.

"How much does it cost to buy in on your game, pardner?"

Brick did not look like money to the dealer, but still another player would increase the rake-off materially. The dealer merely dealt and took the percentage, not playing himself.

"*Un duro*," he said.

"That's one dollar in United States," said Brick. "Gimme *un duro's* worth, will you?"

The dealer gave him a stack of white chips, and the game went on. Brick knew stud poker well enough to realize that a dollar's worth of chips would give him no margin for bluffing. The first pot required all his chips, but he drew out on them, winning three dollars, less the percentage, which was rather high for a small game.

But Brick was not kicking. His luck was with him, and inside of ten more deals he had amassed the munificent sum of twenty-five dollars. Two of the players quit the game, leaving only Joe Pico and Brick.

"If you want to close the game, it's all right with me," said Brick.

"That," said Pico insolently, "is an American trait."

"What's an American trait?" queried Brick.

"To quit when they're ahead of the game."

Brick's ears grew redder, a sure sign that Brick was mad, but his voice was perfectly calm.

"I ain't got no place to go, pardner; but I didn't suppose that it was worth a dealer's time to throw cards to two players."

"I am here to deal," said the man.

"Then let's play poker," grinned Brick. "I'd rather play two handed; it only gives me one man to watch."

THIS TIME it was Pico whose ears turned red. The dealer smothered a smile. Pico had never borne a clean reputation as a gambler. Brick had enough money for a small bluff, a perfect poker face, and it was his lucky day. Pico was hot tempered, nervous, and his eyes were an index to the cards he had drawn. Pot after pot went to Brick, while Pico smoked furiously, cursed in Spanish, and wished he had let this red headed gringo quit while the quitting was good.

But it was too late to quit now. Brick played calmly, smiling most of the time, but watching Pico's eyes. It was not poker—it was robbery. Finally Pico sagged back in his chair, looking moodily at the table.

"Got enough?" queried Brick. "Jist quittin', or are you broke?"

Pico's face hardened, but he did not reply.

"I've got a couple hundred of your money," said Brick. "Ain't you got no friends nor credit in this man's town? I'd like to double this amount, and what you don't know about poker would make a whoppin' big book."

Pico suddenly leaned forward.

"Just now I am short," he said coldly. "Out at the hitch-rack is my horse and saddle. I will sell both to you for one hundred and fifty dollars, if you will continue the play."

"That's a plenty money for a bronc and a hull," grinned Brick. "I'll take a look at 'em, pardner, 'cause I shore need rollin' stock."

They walked out and looked at the saddle and horse. Brick had always detested an ornamental saddle, but he could see that this one was new, and worth many times what Pico asked for both horse and saddle. The sorrel was a good looking, clean limbed animal.

"I'll stake you to that much," agreed Brick. "I don't like all them doodinguses on the saddle, but it ain't costin' me much."

They went back and resumed the game. Fortune seemed to favor Pico for a while, but Brick refused to over play his hands. He wanted that horse and saddle, and he wanted his hundred and fifty dollars back.

Twice in a row he bluffed Picco out of a pot, accidentally turning over his hole card and letting Pico see what he had after the pot was won. Then came Brick's big opportunity. It had cost him fifty dollars to draw the deuce, trey, four and five of hearts, which were in sight.

Pico's hand showed two jacks and two queens. It was foolishness on Brick's part to have stayed in the pot. Pico's eyes had showed him that he had either another jack or queen in the hole. It was Pico's bet, and he hesitated for several moments, studying Brick's cards. If Brick had either an ace or a six of hearts buried, he would have a straight flush. Brick noted the hesitancy, and said to the dealer—

"I plumb forgot to ask you a few questions when I horned into this game. Do you play straights and flushes down here?"

The dealer nodded quickly.

"And a straight flush beats four of a kind?"

"Exactly."

"That's fine," grinned Brick.

"Pass," said Pico softly, his eyes triumphant. He knew now that Brick was bluffing. And Brick seemed to be. Slowly he counted his chips and shoved them to the center. They were not many now. Pico smiled widely, as he shoved all his chips to the center.

"How can I call all that mess?" asked Brick. "I'm broke."

"You still have the horse and saddle?"

"That's right. We'll discount the horse a little, and I call you."

Swiftly Joe Pico turned over his hole card—another jack.

"A full house," he said softly.

Brick flipped over his hole card—the ace of hearts.

"*Madre de Dios!*" snorted the dealer. "A straight flush."

Pico tried to smile, but it was a failure.

"The American don't want to quit, but

he hates solitaire," said Brick seriously. "It has been a profitable day, and I'll buy a drink."

Pico drank grudgingly. He needed the drink to steady his nerves, but he did not like to accept it from this red headed Americano who had the luck of the devil.

"Are you going to stay weeth us a while?" asked the dealer.

"I dunno. I'm lookin' to hook up with some cattle outfit down here. A feller was tellin' me somethin' about a ranch down here; somethin' about roses. I didn't get all of it."

"The Rancho del Rosa?"

"Shore. That's the place. This feller would say seven words in Spanish and one in English—and the English word was damn. Have another drink? No? Is there a clothin' store around here? Across the street? That's great. I shore need clothes. Well, I'll see you later."

Brick went striding out of the place, crossed the street and entered a general merchandise store. Pico had several more drinks, handed out by a generous bartender.

"That man has an insulting tongue," said Pico.

"And a thorough knowledge of stud poker," added the dealer. "When he questioned me of the value of hands, it was for your benefit."

"Only a fool would ask a question which involved his own cards."

"That, my friend, is the secret of poker—to cause a man to believe something which is not true."

"He was insulting," persisted Pico. The several drinks of tequila were taking effect.

The dealer shrugged his shoulders.

"And the horse was worth more than I asked."

"You made the price, and he paid it."

"*Dios*—yes. But I was mad. I cheated myself."

"Another drink—and forget it," said the bartender.

"Another drink—yes—but not to forget."

BRICK spent about an hour in the store. He bought a dark suit, shirts, boots, hat and a cartridge belt and holster. The belt and holster were second hand, and fitted well. In a little saddle store next door, he got a pair of second hand batwing chaps and a pair of spurs. The saddle maker let him change clothes in the back room, and he came out of there looking like the old Brick Davidson of Sun Dog, except that he needed a shave and a haircut.

A few doors farther down the street was a barber shop, and when Brick came out of there, smelling of hair tonic and witch hazel, he was fit to face the world or anybody in it. As he walked up the street, two men rode in and tied their horses. Brick saw the sunlight flash on a badge pinned to a shirt front, and he wondered if this man had ever been called upon to hang a friend. They were standing in front of the store as he came up, and nodded pleasantly.

"Howdy, gents," smiled Brick. "Nice weather we're havin'."

The sheriff smiled.

"Not bad, is it? I don't believe I ever met you?"

"I know danged well you never have—at least, not down here. I just got in a while ago. My name's Davidson."

"My name's Campbell, Davidson. Shake hands with Ortego; he's my deputy."

"Pleased to meetcha," grinned Brick. "How's crime down here?"

"About like it is every other place, I reckon," said the sheriff. "Are you from the north?"

"Yeah. Not enough to be an Eskimo, but enough to freeze my ears in the winter."

They laughed with Brick. Campbell said he had spent several winters in Alberta, and that he was perfectly willing to stay where no snow fell. As they were talking, Joe Pico and the dealer came from the *cantina* and stopped near the sorrel horse. Pico seemed rather drunk.

"They're admirin' my horse," grinned Brick.

"Is that your sorrel?" asked the sheriff.

Brick nodded.

"I won him a while ago. That tall jigger over there thought he could play stud."

"That's Joe Pico," said Ortego. "Probably been down to Gomez Springs."

Brick squinted thoughtfully.

"Is Gomez Springs near here?"

"Down across the Border—about six miles from here."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"Not so good for a gringo."

"Gringo is a white man, ain't it? What have they got against us?"

"Mexico for Mexicans," said the sheriff dryly.

"Didja ever know anybody by the name of Jim Breen around here?"

"He lives in Gomez Springs," said Ortego. "I know him."

Brick was interested.

"What is his business?"

Ortego shrugged his shoulders.

"*Quien sabe?* He comes here once in a while and seems to have plenty money. Runs the big *cantina*, they say."

"Didja ever know a feller named Scotty McKee?"

"Sure," nodded the sheriff. "Scotty used to own the One Oak *cantina* over there. Sold out to Ed Pico, I think. I dunno where Scotty went from here."

Brick was learning things fast. Until he heard Gomez Springs mentioned, he had no idea he was in the country where Scotty McKee used to live.

"How do I get out to that rose ranch?" he asked.

"The Rancho del Rosa? Take the road straight east of here. You can't miss it."

"I heard they might need another puncher."

"I don't know about that," said the sheriff. "Bob Maxwell usually has quite a crew."

"Lots of cattle?"

"Quite a few, I reckon."

Brick thanked them and started across the street. The dealer had gone back into the *cantina*, but Joe Pico lounged in the doorway, smoking a cigaret. Brick walked over and untied the sorrel, talking softly to the animal. Pico lurched away from the doorway and came out toward Brick, his swarthy face twisted into a scowl.

"What you going to do weeth my horse?" he asked. Brick turned his head, a puzzled frown between his blue eyes.

"Your horse?"

"My horse—of course."

Brick turned and rested his hands on his hips.

"Is your memory so short that you don't remember losin' him?"

"You have a bill of sale from me?"

"No, I never got one. But I won this horse, and I take him now."

"You think twice, my friend. You have nothing to show ownership."

"What kind of a skin game is this?" demanded Brick hotly.

"Not any skin game," smiled Pico. "The horse is mine."

"You're cockeyed and crazy!" snorted Brick. "Just watch and see if I don't take this horse."

Brick turned and looped the rope around the saddle horn.

"Jus' a moment," said Pico softly. Brick jerked around. Pico had half drawn his gun.

"We do not wait for the law to deal with horse thieves down here," said Pico meaningly.

IT WAS a foolish move on Pico's part, unless he intended to carry it through. Perhaps he had an idea that the half drawn gun would intimidate the red headed cowboy. At any rate, Pico was totally unprepared for what followed. Brick's right hand snapped down to his holster, jerked up with the same movement, and Joe Pico went staggering back and sidewise when Brick's heavy bullet smashed through his right shoulder.

Pico's gun thudded into the dirt and Pico stopped, sat down against the wall of the *cantina*, a surprised and foolish expression on his face. Brick did not move

for several moments. The sheriff and his deputy were coming across the street. They had seen everything, but did not hear what had been said. The bartender, dealer and a couple of customers crowded the *cantina* doorway, and men were coming from all points of the compass.

"What seems to be the trouble?" asked the sheriff.

Brick stepped past him and faced the men in the doorway.

"Any of you fellers want to tell the world that I didn't win that horse and saddle?" he asked coldly.

"You won it," said the dealer quickly. 'Joe was drunk."

Brick turned to the sheriff.

"He tried to tell me that I didn't own that horse and saddle. Accused me of tryin' to steal it."

"It's all right," said the sheriff. "I seen Pico draw his gun, and you got him quick. Some of you fellers better get a doctor. The horse belongs to you, Davidson."

"Thank you, Sheriff."

Brick walked over to the horse and started to mount. The sheriff came in close to him.

"Watch out for the Pico gang," he warned Brick. "There's several of 'em, and this is the first time that one of 'em has been downed."

"Thank you kindly," smiled Brick, and swung into the saddle.

He thrilled at the feel of a good horse between his knees, the fit of a well made saddle. It was the first time he had been on a horse since he had left Sun Dog. He had ridden into Sicomoro on the rickety wagon of a Mexican wood peddler, dirty, ragged, with only a dollar to his name. Two hours later he was riding away, well dressed, clean shaven, with money in his pocket, astride his own horse in a silver trimmed saddle.

"And still they try to tell us that it's wrong to gamble," he said whimsically. "When the goddess of luck smiles on you, you're a fool if you don't make a fuss over her. Now, all I've got to do is get me a job and look out for the Pico family; and the job worries me the most."

He rode along for a way, examining the silver trimming on the fork of the saddle. Finally he stopped, took out his heavy bladed pocket knife, and proceeded to pry loose the silver rivets. It was a simple matter to strip off all the silver, which was really only a silver plating on white metal. The saddle was so nearly new that there was little indication that the leather had ever been covered.

Brick threw the silver aside as though it were worthless.

"I'd look well huntin' for a job in a saddle like this one was," he told himself. "I'd look like a mail order puncher makin' a flash."

He traveled along the narrow, dusty road, through the boulder strewn hills—the leavings of the ice age. Around and among the boulders grew thorny mesquite, cresote bushes, sage, cactus, and an occasional desert smoke tree, looking at a distance like a puff of yellow smoke.

A sidewinder, the little desert rattlesnake, crossed the road ahead of Brick and he drew rein to watch the little fellow angle his way into the weeds beside the road. A sage rabbit hopped softly into the road, saw the horse only a few feet away, and seemed fairly to explode in a cloud of dust.

Brick lounged sidewise in his saddle, scanning the country to the south. Those mountains down there were in an alien land. Brick wondered where Silent Slade had gone. He and Brick had often talked about the address on that letter, and the few crumbs of marihuana weed in the old tobacco sack.

Brick felt sure that Silent would go as far as his hundred dollars would take him. Silent would never go east, and the west coast would hardly be far enough away from Sun Dog. When Sun Dog County broadcasted his description, it would be difficult for a cowboy of Silent's stature to escape detection. His best chance would be in the southwest, where, in a case of necessity, he could step over into Mexico.

As Brick rode along his eye caught the

flash of a bit of color which did not seem a part of the natural hues of nature. It was a vermillion flash in the sunlight. Brick drew up his horse for a moment, and then swung off the road. The brush was scarcely knee high here, spotty with bare patches of alkali. About fifty yards from the road he found what he sought.

It was a red handkerchief around the neck of a dead cowboy. He was lying flat on his back, arms outspread, one hand still clutching a blue Colt revolver. The man was of medium height, blond, with a deep scar across his left cheek and the side of his nose. He was dressed in a gray shirt, overalls and boots. His hat, a black Stetson with a silver trimmed band, was lying against a bush several feet away. Brick could see where the blood had oozed from a bullet wound just above the left pocket of his gray shirt. Brick did not need to examine him. He did not even dismount. It was a job for the sheriff.

Brick rode back, tied his handkerchief to a bush on the left side of the road to mark the spot, and rode on. It was less than a mile to the Rancho del Rosa. The road led straight in through one of the wide arches of the patio, and the sorrel stopped at the water tub beside the well. The patio was a veritable garden. Roses and ivy had taken the place.

BRICK relaxed and looked around. He had never seen anything like this before. Suddenly he realized that he was looking at a girl. She had been seated on a bench in the shade of the roses, but was coming toward him now. He dismounted quickly and removed his hat.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he smiled. "I was so kinda taken up by this place that I plumb forgot it might belong to somebody."

"*Habla Vd. Español?*" she asked, smiling at him.

"That's the worst of it," complained Brick. "I can say *buenas dias* and *buenas noches*, but that don't make much conversation."

"Then I'll talk English."

"That's my tongue," laughed Brick. "Mebbe I'll learn the other, but I'd hate to miss talkin' to you while I'm learnin'. Ma'am, I'm Arthur William Davidson, but on account of my auburn hair, they call me Brick. And I'm lookin' for a man named Maxwell—Bob Maxwell, I think."

"He is my father. I am Marie Maxwell."

"Well, I'm shore glad to meetcha, Miss Maxwell. Nice place you got here."

"I love it," she said simply.

"Then that makes me and you jist even—so do I."

They were smiling at each other when a man came from the bunkhouse. He was a short, heavily built man, evidently a Mexican. His hair was rather long and a heavy black mustache covered his upper lip.

"Leo, will you please tell Mr. Maxwell that a man wishes to see him?" said Marie.

"*Sí, señorita.*" The man smiled pleasantly and went into the house.

A few moments later Bob Maxwell came out. He was a big, lean faced man, rather swarthy, dark eyed, his black hair turning gray in spots. He smiled at his daughter, who introduced him to Brick.

"I jist kinda rode in on you," grinned Brick. "I'm lookin' for a job, Mr. Maxwell."

"A job, eh?" Maxwell looked keenly at Brick. "What kind of a job?"

"Punchin' cows."

"Oh, yes."

"I was jist driftin' through," said Brick earnestly, "and I heard that you handle quite a lot of cows down here. I needed a job pretty bad, so I came along lookin' for one."

"I see. Well, I'm sorry, Davidson, but just at present I have enough men."

"That makes it tough, don't it? Do you know any other ranch that might need a man?"

"No, I don't."

"Uh-huh," thoughtfully. "Say, I almost forgot. About a mile back towards that town of Sicomoro, on the south side of the road, you'll find a dead man. I

hung my handkerchief on a bush beside the road to mark the place."

"A—a dead man?" faltered Maxwell.

"Shore. Somebody spotted him a dead center shot. I got a flash of red out there, and I—"

"You say the man has been shot?"

"Shore. I dunno how long he's—"

"What does he look like?" interrupted Maxwell.

"Oh, he's about my size, I reckon. Kinda blond, and he's got a scar on one cheek and on his nose."

The blood seemed to drain from Maxwell's face. He and Marie exchanged glances.

"Dell Harper," exclaimed Marie.

"You say he was shot?" asked Maxwell blankly.

"Well, I didn't probe for no bullet, if that's what you mean. He's dead, and he's got a gun in one hand. Mebbe he shot himself. But there didn't seem to be any burns on his shirt. I jist looked at him and came on."

Maxwell rubbed his hands together nervously, started for the bunkhouse, but turned and went back to the veranda. He called to the man who Marie had addressed as Leo. They exchanged a few words in Spanish, and Leo went running across the patio, going out through the rear arch toward the stables.

Maxwell came back to Marie and Brick.

"The dead man was my foreman," he told Brick.

"That's too bad. I saw the sheriff in Sicomoro just before I left."

Maxwell muttered something under his breath, and walked out toward the stables where Leo Herrera was saddling two horses.

"That's kinda tough luck," said Brick slowly. "Has he been with you long, Miss Maxwell?"

"He has been with the rancho a long time, Mr. Davidson. I have only been here less than a year, except when I was a little girl. You see, I have been away to school mostly all my life."

Brick's mind flashed back to Juanita McKee.

"I don't see who could have killed Dell Harper," she said. "He seemed very nice. But some one is always getting shot down here, it seems to me. There is always trouble along the Border."

"I've heard there was," replied Brick. "I reckon the Mexicans make things kinda lively, don't they?"

Marie did not reply. Her father and Herrera were coming in with their horses.

"You say you marked the spot with a handkerchief, Davidson?" asked Maxwell.

"Sure—on the south side of the road. I'll go back with you, if you—"

"That isn't necessary," quickly. "You might put up your horse and stay here awhile—at least, for the day. I—I might be able to use you."

"That would be fine," grinned Brick.

"You'll find the stable out that entrance. Plenty of empty stalls."

Brick thanked him, nodded to Marie, and led his horse back to the stable where he unsaddled the animal and gave it a feed of oats. He came back to the patio and sat down on a bench in the shade to smoke a cigaret. It had been a hard day for Brick, and he was a little weary.

After a few puffs on his cigaret he stretched out on the bench, pillowed his head on his arms, and went to sleep under the bower of climbing roses. But Brick was a light sleeper, and the sound of horses walking across the patio awakened him. He turned his head sidewise and saw two riders near the old well.

ONE WAS a big man wearing a huge Mexican sombrero, while the other was of medium height, slender, and as Brick expressed it, all dogged out fit for a scandal. His blue silk shirt was ornamented with large pearl buttons, his black trousers fitted like the skin on a sausage, and on his feet he wore high heeled patent leather boots. His sombrero was nearly white, surmounted with a black, silver studded band; his necker-

chief was scarlet, and around his slim waist was a fancy sash, beneath his silver studded cartridge belt.

"If that jigger busts into song, I'll know I'm at a show," mused Brick, now wide awake. "Golly, ain't he a shiner!"

The big man did not dismount and kept his back to Brick. Neither of them had seen him on the bench. They talked for several moments, then the slender man adjusted his sash and walked over to the steps of the veranda, as Marie came out. At sight of him she stopped short. From her actions, it was evident that they were either strangers to each other, or Marie did not like him.

Brick could not hear what was said, but he heard the man laugh and say something in Spanish. Marie came out to the steps, and although Brick could not understand Spanish, it was evident that she was telling him that she did not care to talk further with him.

But the man persisted. He became eloquent with his hands. Marie turned to go back into the house, but he grasped her by the wrist and drew her back. She tried to jerk away, but he tightened his grip.

"What she's tellin' him now would burn a hole in the ice," said Brick to himself.

He uncoiled from the bench, took several steps toward the porch, hooking his thumbs over the top of his belt.

"You better let loose of the lady," he said clearly.

The man whirled quickly, glaring at Brick. The big man turned in his saddle, disclosing a huge black beard which grew out from his face like the bristles on a hair brush. Brick was not grinning now, and his mop of red hair was like burnished copper in the sunlight.

The man released Marie, who stepped back quickly.

"And who are you?" asked the dandy coldly.

"I'm the whippoorwill that made you behave yourself."

"And what is this affair to you?"

"Start somethin', and you'll find out," said Brick.

The man looked at Marie then back at Brick, who was slowly rocking on the balls of his feet. His fingers were splayed out a little, but the thumb was still resting on the edge of his belt. It was a danger signal, and the man read it rightly. With a shrug of indifference he turned, bowed gracefully to Marie, came slowly down the steps and walked out to his horse, ignoring Brick entirely.

But Brick did not take his eyes off him as he swung gracefully into the saddle. He wheeled his horse around to the left, presenting his back to the red head. But for several moments the big man continued to look at Brick, who was staring at him, now, his jaw sagging a little. Then the big man turned his horse around and followed the other. As they rode out through the east archway, the big man gave a backward wave of his left hand, but did not lift it above his knee.

Brick relaxed slowly. Marie had come to the edge of the porch and was looking at him.

"Thank you," she said.

"That's all right, ma'am. He ain't exactly an old friend of the family, is he?"

"He is an old friend of my father."

"Oh, yeah?"

"His name is Jim Breen."

"Well, can you imagine that? Jim Breen, eh?"

"You knew him?"

Brick took a deep breath and shook his head.

"No, ma'am. I never seen him before, but I've heard the name. Do you know the man who was with him?"

"No, I don't believe I have ever seen him before. Jim Breen came to see my father."

"I suppose that's why he pawed you around thataway. He'll probably tell your dad about me, and I won't have no more job than a jackrabbit. Still, I don't suppose your dad wants to have folks pawin' you around."

"Well, I don't, at least, Mr. Davidson —and I thank you again."

"Neither do I—and you're welcome," grinned Brick.

Marie started to walk back into the house, but came out again.

"I'm sorry it happened," she told Brick. "Jim Breen and my father are close friends, and I—I hope we will understand."

"Jim Breen?"

"No, my father."

"Don't let that worry you none," said Brick.

"But you wanted to work here, and—"

"Shucks," laughed Brick, "I ain't got the job yet—prob'ly never will. Don't let it worry you. I'm sorry it happened, ma'am, but when you stop to consider, it could have been a lot worse."

"I was afraid it would be, Mr. Davidson. Jim Breen is rather an impulsive person."

"I noticed that. Still, he never got impulsive with me."

Marie smiled and walked away, while Brick went back to the bench in the shade of the roses, where he rolled a cigaret. His fingers trembled just a little, but it was not the reaction from his near encounter with Jim Breen. It was because he recognized the bearded man as Silent Slade.

"CAN YOU beat that?" Brick asked himself. "Silent trailin' with Jim Breen. What kind of a mess is this down here anyway? I have to shoot a man to collect the horse I won fairly, then I find a dead man sprawled in the sun with a bullet through his heart, and then Silent with the man whose name was on that envelope.

"A friend of Maxwell, is he? And he tries to paw Maxwell's daughter, who is scared that my interference might cause complications. I've been in this country half a day, and I've made plenty enemies. That's what you git for havin' red hair, I s'pose. Hm-m-m. If I was showin' any sense, I'd saddle my bronc and keep on goin'. Silent didn't want to know me, although he slipped me a signal. I reckon I'll stick around and see what the big feller has on his mind."

It was about two hours later when Maxwell came back. Herrera was not with him. He was accompanied by Campbell, the sheriff, and another man. This other man was rather tall, slender, hard faced. His skin was burned to the texture of leather.

Brick noticed that Maxwell seemed greatly depressed and tired. He immediately went into the house. The sheriff introduced Brick to the stranger, whose name was Berry.

"Mr. Berry is one of the Border patrol," explained the sheriff.

"I've heard about you folks," smiled Brick.

"Nothin' good, I'll bet," said Berry.

"All accordin' to who tells it. How was the patient gettin' along when you left, Sheriff?"

"Pico? Oh, he'll get well. Damn' fools are hard to kill, Davidson. Maxwell tells me that you were the one who found Harper, the dead man, out there along the road."

Brick explained how he happened to see the flash of color and discover the body.

"I didn't know who he was until I described him to Maxwell. Who do you think killed him?"

The sheriff shook his head slowly.

"No idea, Davidson."

"You're a stranger down here, ain't you?" asked Berry.

"Yeah, but I seem to be gettin' acquainted in a hurry," laughed Brick.

"But not enough to understand local conditions. You're from the north?"

"Montana."

"I see. Are you goin' to work for Maxwell?"

"That's a question. I haven't been hired yet."

"Maxwell is a fine man, Davidson. The killing' of his foreman has hit him mighty hard. Harper has been with him a long time. There's quite a lot of killin' done along this part of the Border, but we can account for quite a lot of it because of the constant feud between the smugglers and the hijackers."

"The hijacker is the feller who steals from the smuggler, ain't he?"

"That's the idea," said Berry. "As

soon as the smuggler has done all the dangerous work, the hijacker takes the stuff away from him."

"Can you blame the smuggler for killin' him?" asked Brick.

"Well," smiled Berry, "from the smuggler's viewpoint, it's justifiable homicide, I suppose. But it all goes to make things hard for us."

"You don't mean that this Harper was mixed up with one faction or the other, do you?"

The officer shook his head quickly.

"There has never been any suspicion about Harper or anybody connected with the Rancho del Rosa."

"You asked about Jim Breen," reminded the sheriff. "He was in town when we left there."

"Do you know Jim Breen?" asked Berry.

"Never met him. I jist heard about him, that's all."

The two officers shook hands with Brick and rode away. A few minutes later Maxwell came out and Brick crossed the patio to him. Maxwell looked Brick over, a troubled expression in his eyes.

"I'm sorry about what happened a while ago, Davidson," he said slowly. "I'm sure Jim Breen didn't—he's of rather an impulsive nature, you see. Marie told me. I heard what happened between you and Joe Pico. That was rather unfortunate. Now, I'm putting it up to you, whether you stay or not."

"You mean that I get the job, unless I'm scared to stay here?"

"That's the situation exactly."

"I'll stay."

Maxwell smiled thinly.

"That's what Marie said."

"I guess it's my red hair," grinned Brick.

CHAPTER III

BRICK HORNS IN ON A CONFERENCE

IN THE days that followed, Brick learned much of the local history. There were only five cowboys, including Brick, employed at the Rancho del Rosa. Slim Neeley, a long geared cowboy from the Panhandle; Buck Eads, a hard headed waddy from New Mexico, Leo Herrera and Johnny Snow, younger than the rest, a wild riding young man from eastern Oregon.

Brick liked Johnny the best of the lot, and it did not take Brick long to discover that the youngster was in love with Marie. He admitted frankly that Marie did not know it.

"Ain't she a pippin, Brick?" he asked, as they rode the brushy hills north of Sicomoro.

"She's just fine. But, boy, I've got my work cut out. Her old man wants her to marry Jim Breen. Can you imagine that? No, you can't, because you don't know Breen."

None of the boys knew of the incident which had happened in the patio the day Brick arrived at the rancho.

"But does she want to marry Jim Breen?" asked Brick.

"*Quien sabe?* She's half Spanish or Mexican, and she might do what her old man tells her to do. Ed Pico used to ramble down here to see her once in a while, but Maxwell shore stopped that in a hurry. I wish I'd been in Sicomoro the day you pasted a hunk of lead into Joe Pico. He's *mucho malo*, that hombre. And you want to look out, Brick.

"Ed Pico ain't so liable to mix into it, but there's Al Abelardo and Bill Abelardo, Joe's cousins. They're bad . . . Wish I knew who killed Dell Harper."

"Did you ever know a feller named Scotty McKee?"

"Shore. He used to run the Solo Encinas *cantina* in Sicomoro. He was all right, too. But all of a sudden he sold out to Ed Pico and faded out of the country. That was over a year ago."

"What does Jim Breen do for a livin'?"

"Oh, he's half owner of the big *cantina* and gamblin' house in Gomez Springs, and he's got a little rancho about a mile below the Border, kinda southeast of Sicomoro. Wait'll you see him, Brick. He's the fanciest dresser you ever seen. He's got one vest with turquoise buttons.

It's a fact. And he's plenty *rapido* with a six-gun."

"Got plenty nerve?"

"Well," grinned Johnny, "it takes nerve to dress the way he does."

"I suppose the Border patrol has a job to handle down here."

"Shore. But what can they do? They don't get much help from anybody, because it's dangerous to buck either element. Me, I'm just a waddy, gettin' along. There's a lot of money to be made down here, if you want to take a chance on the hot end of a bullet, or the inside of a Federal penitentiary. I don't, I'm plenty sure."

"Nor me," grinned Brick. "I was just wonderin' which side of the fence Jim Breen would be on—if any."

"Well, he wouldn't hardly be a hijacker, Brick. He'd last about as long as a snowball in hell. You can bet your last pair of socks that anybody livin' in *Mejico* is either a smuggler or nothin'. Gomez Springs has only about five hundred inhabitants, but it draws from a lot of country. Old Miguel Gomez owned the town until Diaz came along and cut him off at the pockets. He nailed the old man, but he missed the son, who is worse than the old man ever was. Lobo Gomez don't own the town, but he thinks he does.

"He's a great big ignorant greaser, part Injun, with an inflated idea of what he is. He don't dare cross the Border because he's pulled enough rough stuff to draw a first class bullet. I've heard that Lobo is the sweet young thing who brings the contraband to Gomez Springs for the lusty smugglers. He gets his percentage without any danger, except from his own government, which recognizes him as a dirty deuce in their dog eared pack of outlaws, and of not enough importance to bother about killin'."

"We'll have to go down to Gomez Springs some day," smiled Brick.

"I'll go," said Johnny. "The last time I was down there, me and Slim Neeley shore came away in a hurry. A fat headed gringo got into some kinda trouble in the big *cantina*, and me and Slim elects to help him out. You can't allow your own kind to get the worst of it in a foreign land, can you?

"I dunno what the total loss was, but my gun was empty when we piled this gringo on a horse in front of Slim and headed north. He had been hit over the head kinda hard, and Slim had a job holdin' him upright. Anyway, we beat the gang to the Border and took the feller to Sicomoro, where we set him down on a sidewalk in the light from a window. He's plumb conscious now, but he's got an egg sized lump on his head. He looks up at Slim and says—

" '*Deutschland über alles.*'

"Me and Slim ain't been down there since. Slim ain't got no sense of humor, anyway. He says that next time he's goin' to know more about a man before he horns in on a rescue party."

"What do you think of the Mexicans as a people?" asked Brick.

"Fine. The real honest to gosh Mexican is fine. They're honest and proud as the devil. We don't get many of 'em up here. You can't no more judge the Mexican people by what you find along here than you can judge the white races by these Border toughs. Most any old time you find a tough gang of Mexicans, you'll find a white man leadin' 'em."

"Breen is an American, ain't he?"

"From Indiana," laughed Johnny. "He's a fair sample. I'm wonderin' why you're so interested in Breen, when you say you don't know him."

"I reckon I do kinda speak about him often," smiled Brick. "But I've got a reason, pardner. I'll let you in on somethin', if you'll keep it under your hat."

And while they rode back to the rancho, Brick told Johnny Snow the story of what had happened in Sun Dog. Johnny was amazed over it all, and more so, when Brick told him what had happened that day in the patio.

"And this big feller was your old bunkie, eh?" he marveled. "Ridin' with Jim Breen. Can you imagine that? Shore sounds like one of them story

books, this idea of you comin' all the way down here, and all this happenin'. And he recognized you? Say, that must have been a shock."

"It was a shock," said Brick. "I didn't even know he was headin' for this country, but I kinda had a hunch."

"Well," said Johnny seriously, "I don't like Breen and I ain't got no use for the Pico outfit, so if you don't mind, I'd like to set in with you on this game. No, I ain't got nobody to mourn my loss. I was an orphan further back than I remember. There's nobody to notify in case I get stopped short, except the sheriff."

"That's shore nice of you, pardner, but I ain't askin' for help."

"I'm just offerin' it, Brick."

"Thank you, Johnny. I'm hopin' for peace."

"So am I, but I'll keep on wearin' a gun."

IT WAS hard for Brick to connect the Rancho del Rosa with trouble and strife. It seemed so peaceful there. An old Mexican woman served their meals out on the veranda, which overlooked the patio. The work was light at this time of the year. The inquest over the body of Dell Harper was a mere formality. Brick was obliged to testify concerning the discovery of the body.

They buried him in the little cemetery at Sicomoro, and there was another Border mystery to be solved. Brick saw Ed Pico and the Abelardo brothers at the funeral, but they paid no attention to him. Joe Pico was getting along well, according to the sheriff, who talked with Brick after the funeral. Berry, and another of the Border patrol was there. Brick saw Berry point him out to the other officer.

After the funeral service, Berry shook hands with Brick and introduced him to Mitchell, the other officer.

Brick had had little chance to talk with Bob Maxwell since that first day. Maxwell had appointed Slim Neeley foreman, and the boys took their orders from him. But Brick had an idea that something was bothering Maxwell. He seemed nervous, irritable, inclined to keep to himself.

Brick mentioned it to Johnny Snow.

"I didn't think anythin' about it until you mentioned it," said Johnny. "There is a change in the old man."

Maxwell was by no means an old man, but most of the boys referred to him by that title.

"Mebbe he's worryin' about Harper bein' killed," suggested Brick.

"That might be. He's got somethin' on his mind. It might be Jim Breen. You say Marie told him about Breen grabbin' her by the wrist. Mebbe it bothers him."

"What would prevent a gang from across the Border rustlin' Maxwell's cattle?"

"Nothin'. That's been done plenty, but not just around here. Maxwell has always minded his own business, been friends with everybody, and his cattle have been left alone. I think that's why he's minded his own business all this time. Bob Maxwell is nobody's fool, Brick."

"No, I reckon not; but I hope he don't marry his daughter off to a damn' renegade like Breen, who ain't neither white nor Mexican."

"If Breen knew what I think about it, he'd shoot me in the dark of the moon," said Johnny seriously.

That evening Buck Eads was dealing ecarte in the bunkhouse. All the boys were playing two bit stakes, except Johnny, who was out at the stable. He had snapped his rope in the middle that afternoon, and was putting a hondo on a new one.

It was about nine o'clock when Johnny came in. He managed to catch Brick's eye, and flashed him a signal to come outside. Brick yawned and sauntered out.

"Jim Breen came in about five minutes ago," whispered Johnny. "He was all alone. I think that him and the old man are up there in that corner room where

you see the light. I hate like hell to listen in on anybody, but we could use that long ladder—and I don't think the window is all the way down."

"I'm shore surprised at you," said Brick earnestly. "Where's the ladder?"

Together they secured the ladder, which reached to the upper balcony, and leaned it softly against the old railing.

"I'll do the listenin'," whispered Brick. "If they catch me, it'll be all right. You don't want to lose your job, you know."

Johnny made no comment. He stood at the foot of the ladder in the deep shadow, while Brick climbed silently to the balcony and crossed over to the window. The curtains were closed, but the voices of the two men were audible. Maxwell was talking angrily.

". . . ALWAYS been square, Jim, and you know it. If Dell had them, which I doubt, he'd—"

"Wait a minute, Bob," said Breen. "That remark reflects back on me. I tell you he had 'em. Wong Kee sent 'em across by Dell. He told me he did, and Wong Kee never lied to us in his life. We've always trusted him because he had more brains than any of us. It was his job to scheme out things to beat the customs and the hijackers, and you know how well he's done it. If Wong Kee says he sent 'em across by Dell Harper, that's what he done, Bob. Wong Kee was as honest as a dollar."

"Why do you say 'was'?"

"Because," said Breen slowly, "Wong Kee got into a mess with several other chinks in a fan-tan game that night, and died with a knife between his shoulders."

"My God! Do you mean to tell me that nobody knows how they were sent?"

"You know well enough that Wong Kee never told anybody, except the man he selected to take the stuff across. He wouldn't work any other way."

"And both of them are dead. Jim, don't you realize what it means? Every cent I'm worth is gone. Oh, I've been afraid of something like this all the time. Trusting a damn' Chinaman."

"But who got 'em?" demanded Breen. "Who killed Harper? The hijackers never got 'em. They knew that the stuff was coming across. Don't ask me how they found out. There always is leaks. But it wasn't the hijackers that killed Harper."

"Leaks," groaned Maxwell. "And I mortgaged everything I owned to put this deal over. Well, I'm down and out."

"Are you?" Breen did not seem convinced. "I had a lot of money in the deal, and so did others. They don't know you as well as I do."

"You don't mean to say they think *I* got 'em?"

"I didn't think so, Bob. They've been investigating, but they're fully convinced that the hijackers didn't get 'em. It's a cinch that the Border patrol didn't, or they'd be crowing loud enough to be heard back in Washington. Now what's to be done?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"You better come over the line and convince the others that you didn't doublecross anybody."

"I'll do nothing of the kind."

"Suit yourself. I'll go back and tell them that you deny having anything to do with it. I lose ten thousand dollars, but that's all right; I'm not whining."

"Suppose Wong Kee never sent 'em across? Suppose somebody knifed him for the layout, Jim?"

"Not a chance. We've investigated that. What became of that damn' red headed puncher who got smart with me the other day? I suppose you heard about it."

"I heard about it and gave him a job."

"Oh, you did, eh? On the strength of the deal, I suppose."

"Breen, we better come to an understanding. Marie don't like you. She has told me that a number of times. She's old enough now to know what she wants. Leave her alone from now on."

Breen laughed shortly.

"Oh, well," he said, "I suppose I did

get a little rough. But she got mad at me and told me a few things I didn't care to hear. But I don't intend to let that redhead get away with any tough stuff."

"He's the one who put Joe Pico in care of the doctor."

"That was fine. I wish he'd lead up the whole Pico outfit, but he better not make any more breaks toward me. I'm goin' back now, and I'll try to explain to the boys."

"I don't think any explanation is needed. If they can find out who killed Harper, they'll find the stuff. I'm sure I didn't kill him."

"Well, I'll talk to 'em, Bob."

As they left the room, Brick hurried down the ladder. Swiftly they put it away and went out to the stable. Breen came out alone and rode away. Brick did not know how much he ought to tell Johnny, but finally decided to keep most of it to himself.

"It was about Marie," he told Johnny. "Breen was sore about what happened here the other day. I reckon he's out to get me. Anyway, Maxwell told him to leave Marie alone from now on."

"Gee, that's great. What did Breen say?"

"He didn't like it, but he didn't complain."

"Maxwell better not trust him too far."

"I'll betcha Maxwell knows it."

"I don't see how Maxwell can afford to mix with Breen. If the Border officers—but they all know the old man is on the square. Brick, I'm sure glad I thought of that ladder. Let's go and see if we can't clean up Buck's ecarte game."

BRICK played a few more hands of ecarte and went to bed. He wanted a chance to think things over. He knew now that Maxwell was a smuggler, in cahoots with Jim Breen. It was evident that a valuable cargo had gone astray, and it had to do with the killing of Dell Harper. He had heard Maxwell declare that he had mortgaged the rancho in order to put over the deal, and that this would break him.

No wonder Maxwell had seemed nervous. Brick wondered what kind of a cargo it was—a cargo small enough for one man to carry, and still be of such value. From the conversation Brick had overheard, he surmised that a Chinaman named Wong Kee was the one who figured out the ways to send the stuff across.

Brick realized that it would require a keen mind to devise ways of outwitting the Border patrol and the hijackers, and that a Chinaman might well be mentally equipped to handle this kind of a job. Wong Kee had evidently sent the stuff across the line by Harper, and then got himself killed in a fan-tan game without disclosing to Jim Breen the method used in that particular case. With both Harper and Wong Kee dead, no man knew how it had been sent.

Brick knew nothing of the smuggling game, except that they were a desperate lot of men who stopped at nothing to complete their work. If Jim Breen was a smuggler, which he apparently was, Silent Slade was working at the same game. When Johnny crawled into the bunk beside Brick, the redhead whispered to him—

"How many drugs could one man carry?"

"Kinds or value?" asked Johnny.

"Value."

"Oh, I dunno, Brick. A good many thousands of dollars' worth, I reckon. You wasn't thinkin' of packin' in a supply, was you?"

"No, I was just wonderin' about it."

"Well, it's a bum job. I don't mind what else they smuggle in, but I'm shore against dope. Know anythin' about drugs?"

"Not much, Johnny. What's marihuana?"

"The worst loco weed on earth. Grows down here, and the Mexicans smoke it in with their tobacco. Oh, it shore freezes their nerves all right. Too *mucho*, and they go haywire—crazy. And it hits a white man worse."

"Do white men use it?"

"Do they? Show me anythin' a white man won't do. We're a versatile race, cowboy. Say, do you reckon the old man was serious when he told Jim Breen to keep away from Marie? I don't blame the old man for tellin' that jigger to keep away from the girl; but the old man better not get in bad with Breen. I figure Breen is a *grande hombre* down across the line, and he could shore deal this rancho plenty trouble.

"Me, I'd jist as soon swap lead with that bunch as not. I've got jist a faint suspicion that a lot of them lazy jiggers has been fattenin' their insides with Maxwell cattle for a long time, and if any trouble ever busts, they'll clean out the Rancho del Rosa pretty pronto. A man couldn't run fast enough to give me a ranch this near the Border."

"Won't the Mexican government give us any protection?"

"How can they? They used to have a bunch of *soldados* over at Gomez Springs, but they moved 'em out. Your protection is to stay on this side of the line, pardner."

"Well," said Brick sleepily, "I dunno whether I want to go over there or not."

"Aw, it's fun," laughed Johnny. "I suppose they're layin' for me and Slim. He won't go. He says what's the use? Kill off a dozen *contrabandistas* to rescue a Dutchman. Slim's practical. We'll go over and see what she looks like. I missed one jigger twice, and he might hold still the next time . . . Well, good night."

CHAPTER IV

SILENT SLADE—OUTLAW

SILENT SLADE did not know yet what it was all about. After he left Marlin City, he rode as far as the hundred dollars would take him, and then kept right on going south. He had a vague idea of going straight through to Central or South America. He rode on freight trains, asked for rides along the highways, and when there was not anything better, he walked. An occasional job provided him with food, but he did not stop long in any one place.

He realized that the law has a long arm. His whiskers and hair grew, but his great size was undisguisable. He came to Sicomoro much in the same way as Brick Davidson a little later, found a sheriff there, and kept right on down across the line, ending his pilgrimage at Gomez Springs. The name of Jim Breen was vaguely familiar, but he did not connect it with the one Brick had found on that letter.

It did not take Silent long to discover that Gomez Springs was a haven for wanted men. Breen gave him a job in the big *cantina* as a bouncer, but was obliged to take him off the job because he did not understand Spanish. Breen had four renegade whites—Mahan, Eddy, Kelsey and Berg—taking care of his rancho. He sent Silent to join them. Together with a buck toothed Chinaman, Ling, they made up the personnel of Breen's rancho, whereas one man could have handled the work.

Silent did not like the outfit, and it took him quite a while to resign himself to it. Berg told Silent that Mahan had killed a policeman in Yuma, Kelsey was wanted for a mail robbery and a killing, and Eddy was wanted for things too numerous to mention. Berg did not say what he was wanted for, but Kelsey told Silent that Berg did not dare to poke his nose across the line.

Silent drank too much tequila one day, and confided to Kelsey that he was under sentence to hang for a murder in Montana. This information gave Silent a good standing on the rancho and in Gomez Springs. It just happened that Breen asked Silent to ride with him the day they went to the Rancho del Rosa. Silent had no liking for that side of the line, but he went along, and he was rather in a daze for several hours after seeing Brick Davidson in the patio of the rancho. He wanted to stay and join forces with Brick, but his better judgment told him no.

Breen was angry over Brick's interfer-

ence, but said nothing to Silent. Silent told the boys at the rancho about the incident, not mentioning the fact that he knew Brick. The gang was rather amused. None of them admired Jim Breen, but they needed his money and his protection. As Johnny Snow had told Brick, Jim Breen was a *grande hombre*, a big man, in Gomez Springs.

The control of Gomez Springs seemed to be vested in three men. Breen, Lobo Gomez, a son of his father, and Lee Duck, an unassuming Chinaman who wore yellow diamonds and a bland smile. Gomez, nicknamed Wolf, was a big man physically, overbearing, with a prodigious thirst for tequila. He wore a huge mustache, leather, silver trimmed shirts, and the biggest sombrero in Mexico. Gomez was an ignorant bandit, but with his own following. Lee Duck was probably the smartest man in the trio, and Breen was wise enough to realize this. But to Lobo Gomez, he was just a yellow Chinaman. He knew the breed. Had not he smuggled dozens of them across the line?

It was the day after Brick had listened at Maxwell's window that Breen came out to his rancho. He was in a bad humor, and Kelsey told Silent that a big deal had gone wrong. A little later in the day, Lobo Gomez and two of his henchmen came along.

"Looks like a conference," grinned Kelsey. "Wonder where the chink is?"

It was supper time when Lee Duck arrived. He was the only one of the three that did not affect a bodyguard.

THE BREEN rancho was not a big place. It was hidden away on a little mesa-like shelf, with the only approach from the south. The builder had an eye for business and safety. It was but little over a mile from the Border, but difficult of approach. The buildings were of adobe, one storied, and almost invisible at any distance. The ranch did not belong to Breen. There were no boundary marks, no fences, except the corrals.

Jim Breen brought plenty of tequila along and passed it out to the boys. Silent declined. Not that he did not drink, but he wanted to be sober enough to hear what was being said. The other boys were not particular.

After a venison supper, a cold wind whirled down across the little mesa and they gathered around the big fireplace in the low ceiled room, sitting on crude benches and the floor.

"You talked with Maxwell?" queried the Chinaman in English.

Breen nodded sullenly, staring at the blazing mesquite roots in the fireplace.

"Talk Spanish," ordered Gomez, speaking in that tongue.

"I talked with him," replied Breen, who spoke Spanish like a Mexican.

"And he denied everything?" said Lee Duck.

"Yes."

"What do you believe?" asked Gomez heavily. He had eaten too much and the heat made him drowsy.

"I don't believe Maxwell had any hand in the deal."

"If not—who did?" asked the Chinaman softly. "The hijackers did not get them. I have a way of finding out."

"Find out who they are, and we will kill them," grunted Gomez.

The Chinaman smiled blandly.

"My information does not cover persons—only conditions. The man who told me would be in a position to know if the hijackers got the diamonds. They did not."

Silent pricked up his ears at the word diamonds. The Chinaman had used the English word instead of the Spanish, and had also used hijackers, because there is no Spanish equivalent.

"What did Maxwell say?" asked Gomez.

"That the loss will ruin him."

"That is probably true," said Lee Duck.

"And that perhaps Wong Kee never sent them across," added Breen. "But Wong Kee told me he did. He gave them to Harper."

"Did he send for Harper?" queried the Chinaman.

Breen shrugged his shoulders.

"If he did," said the Chinaman, "Maxwell would possibly know why."

"You mean he'd kill Harper and get the diamonds?" asked Breen.

"Harper is dead and the diamonds are gone. Wong Kee is dead, and the hijackers did not get the diamonds."

"Bring Maxwell here and we will get the truth," said Gomez. "There is a matter of many thousands to clear up."

"I can't believe that Maxwell would take them," said Breen. "He's always played square with us. His money paid for the bulk of those stones."

"Half," corrected the Chinaman.

"Breen seeks to protect Maxwell," grinned Gomez. "It is said that he is to marry Maxwell's daughter."

"You damn' greaser!" snapped Breen in English.

The cowboys laughed and Gomez swelled visibly. He understood the word greaser very well, and any English profanity. But Breen did not fear Gomez. Sometimes he wished for a chance to kill him. The big bandit was becoming a nuisance in many ways. Breen wanted to boss Gomez Springs, without any interference.

"Nothing can be gained by quarreling," said the Chinaman softly. "This is the first reverse we have suffered."

"It was our first big chance," reminded Breen angrily. "The rest of the deals were small compared with this—fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds."

"A hundred thousand in the States," said the Chinaman. "You say that this deal will ruin Maxwell?"

"He mortgaged his rancho to the hilt. He had no ready cash."

"Perhaps he can sell what he owns and pay up the mortgage."

"And have nothing left."

"It is of little interest to me," growled Gomez. "If Maxwell is to lose what he owns, and if he has played false with us—there are many of his fat cattle in the hills, and a market in Mexico."

"Damn' cow thief," grunted Breen. "Penny ante bandit. He ought to be picking pockets in a small town."

"Speak Spanish," ordered Gomez.

"You spoke to me of a red headed cowboy—the one who shot Joe Pico in Sicomoro," reminded the Chinaman.

Breen spat savagely into the fire.

"He is still there. As far as the shooting of Joe Pico was—"

"I understand that," interrupted Lee Duck. "I merely meant to say that the redhead found the body of Dell Harper. Did you ever stop to consider that he might have stolen the diamonds?"

"That's worth thinking about," said Breen quickly. "I never figured him in on this. We'll have to find out what he knows about it."

"Bring him down here to me, and I'll make him tell what he knows," said Gomez. "I can make him talk. Were you not across the line the day Harper was killed?"

Breen turned his head and eyed Gomez angrily.

"You don't mean to connect me with the killing, do you?"

Gomez shrugged his shoulders.

"Some day," said Breen coldly, "there's going to be a lot of rotten Spanish spoken in hell—and you'll speak it, Gomez."

"Say that in Spanish," said Gomez.

"It's the same in any language," growled Breen.

Silent hunched against the wall, wondering what all the conversation was about. He did not understand a word of Spanish. It was the same with Mahan, Berg and Eddy. Kelsey understood Spanish, and after the conference broke up and the three principals had gone back to Gomez Springs, he told them the gist of the conversation.

"THIS CHINK named Wong Kee sent the diamonds across the line by Dell Harper, and somebody killed Harper. Wong Kee was the smart one of the gang. He never told anybody how he sent the stuff.

That's how there wasn't any chance for one of the gang to doublecross the rest. Wong Kee was paid a commission on the value of the stuff, so he didn't have no interest, except to get it across safely.

"They think Maxwell got the diamonds. Anyway, Gomez and the chink feel that way. I guess Breen is doubtful about it. They've got their eye on that red headed waddy who shot Joe Pico. He was the one who found Harper, and they think he pinched the diamonds off Harper's body. God help him if Lobo Gomez ever gets him down here. I'd hate to have that big brute lay out a torture for me."

"What was that bunch of diamonds worth?" asked Silent.

"I guess it cost them about fifty thousand, and that's only about half what the bunch would be worth across the line. Even at that, it wouldn't make a very big package."

"Fifty thousand," repeated Silent. "That's money."

"Gomez wants to raid the Maxwell rancho," laughed Kelsey. "That'll be our job, I suppose. I don't mind rustlin' cows. You don't run foul of the government, runnin' cattle. I've never hankered for a look at the inside of a Federal prison."

"Suppose they do smuggle a bunch of diamonds across the line," said Silent. "Who sells 'em?"

"Oh, they've got an agent. Didn't you ever meet Sohmes? No, I guess he ain't been down here since you came. He sells 'em in Los and Frisco. There's plenty market for sparklers. I'd like to have a chance to hijack a bunch of 'em."

"You better keep that talk to yourself," advised Mahan.

"I'm not scared of Breen and Gomez. This is a game of dog eat dog down here anyway. Some day the Mexican government will fall in on us and line us all up against a blank wall. The newspapers in the States are all talkin' too much about this part of the country. There'll be one grand cleanin' some day, just for the moral effect. I've been here for two years, you must remember."

"Have you been with Breen all that time?" asked Silent.

"Nope. I've been with Breen over a year. Some day they'll get him. He worked the smugglin' game alone for a long time, but a man doublecrossed him one day and broke him. The man worked the north end of the deal, and he shore cleaned Mr. Breen to the queen's taste. But Breen made another stake and joined in with Gomez and the chink. They threw in with Maxwell and everythin' went fine, until this diamond deal."

"Do you ever go across the line?" asked Silent.

"Not a chance," grinned Kelsey. "They'd grab me in a minute. Campbell knows I'm down here. I'll bet he's got the deadwood on every one of us."

"I went across with Breen," said Silent. "We went to Sicomoro, and we saw the sheriff. In fact, Breen talked with him."

"He's got nothin' on Breen except suspicions. Mebbe he don't know who you are, Slade. You're lucky if he don't."

"I'm not goin' back. I'll take a chance down here."

"It's all right for a while," said Mahan, "but you stay down here a year or so and you'll want to go back. I've got a girl in San Berdoo."

"Daughter?" asked Silent.

"No, thank God. I never stayed still long enough to get married."

"I'd like to go back," sighed Eddy. "I've got a sister in Phœnix."

"Aw, shut up," said Berg angrily. "Whinin' about home. Why didn't you think of it before? You've made your own bed, so lay on it. You're free, at least. I don't want to spend my life down here either, but it's a damn' sight better than lookin' through the bars."

"Berg's right," declared Silent. "We're danged well off, if we only know it. But I wish I could *hablar Español*."

"You'll get it," said Kelsey. "Get you a girl who talks it. That's how I learned."

CHAPTER V

GOMEZ SPRINGS

BRICK had been just a little worried since he had overheard the conversation between Maxwell and Breen. He did not trust Breen for a minute. Under the circumstances, the Rancho del Rosa had no protection from a raid, and Brick did not dare tell the other boys what he knew. Brick was sure that Marie did not know her father was in partnership with Jim Breen.

In fact, Brick had had little opportunity to talk with Marie since he came to work for Maxwell. He knew that Maxwell was worried. He had no way of hearing how things were going down across the line, and there was the dreadful uncertainty of what Breen, Lee Duck and Lobo Gomez might decide to do.

Maxwell gave Slim orders to have the boys move all the cattle off the south end of the range and throw them on the north side. Brick knew he was afraid of having them stolen across the line. The boys discussed this phase of it, deciding that Maxwell had some intimation of a raid. They rather welcomed a chance for action.

Brick kept away from Sicomoro. He did not want trouble with the Pico gang. While they were moving the cattle, Brick met Berry and Mitchell, the Border patrolmen, and Berry wanted to know if they were rounding up the cattle for shipment. Brick told him what their orders were, and Berry was interested.

"I guess I better have a talk with Maxwell," he said. "Bob is so square, he would not squeal on anybody. If he's got wind of a raid on his cattle, I want the dope on it and so does Campbell. There's men down there we'd like to catch across the Border, Davidson."

"I s'pose that's right," smiled Brick.

"There's a lot of wanted men down there," said Mitchell.

"Sort of a refuge, eh?"

"Campbell has a bunch spotted down there. Their combined rewards would make a nice stake for somebody. Campbell was tellin' me yesterday about one feller. He's dead sure it's the right man. This feller was under sentence of death away up in Montana, but he got away. Name's Slade. Campbell got the reward notice through the regular channels, I guess. There wasn't any picture, but the description sure fits the feller who was in Sicomoro a few days ago with Jim Breen. Campbell didn't think about it at the time. Mebbe he's wrong, but he don't think so."

Brick's eyes hardened. It seemed as though Mitchell was telling all this for his special benefit. But before he finished, Brick realized that the telling was either merely a coincidence, or Berry and Mitchell were clever actors.

"I suppose they come quite a ways," said Brick.

"That's the longest trip I've heard about," laughed Mitchell. "He's worth five thousand dollars, dead or alive. Campbell is sure kickin' himself for overlookin' the chance."

Brick wondered how he could get word to Silent, warning him to keep across the line. If he and Johnny went to Gomez Springs they might see Silent, but Brick knew he would be throwing himself wide open to a lot of trouble if Breen saw him down there. Brick could see plenty of trouble ahead, without hunting for it.

That afternoon Maxwell came to Brick and asked him to drive a team to Sicomoro. He told Brick that some company was coming on the stage and that he was to bring them back to the rancho. Slim hitched the team to a two seated buggy, and then Brick found that Marie was going with him. She climbed on the seat beside him, and they drove away from the ranch.

"I haven't had much chance to talk with you," she said, after they left the rancho. "Dad isn't feeling well, and he seems to want me with him most of the time. Do you like it here?"

"Yes'm, I like it fine. Your dad is a good man to work for."

"Dad is fine. I guess everybody likes him. Do you like the boys? I've noticed

that you and Johnny Snow are together most of the time."

"I like Johnny fine," smiled Brick. "He's a nice, clean kid."

"He is a nice boy."

"Yeah," thoughtfully. "He's better than the average, Miss Maxwell."

"Why don't you call me Marie? Everybody else does."

"I'd like to. I'm used to callin' folks by their first name. Nobody ever calls me anything but Brick—unless they're sore at me. And that happens a lot. I reckon I'm a regular trouble hunter. That's my red hair, I s'pose."

"Your hair *is* red," laughed Marie.

"Y'betcha. No half way stuff with me. I started out to have red hair and I made good. Nothin' auburn about my head, and I'll count freckles with any livin' human. They don't show so much down here on account of this tan, but you give me a few months of winter weather, and I'll blossom out with the finest bunch of freckles you ever saw."

"And you have the bluest eyes I have ever seen, Brick."

"That's my sunny disposition," laughed Brick. "I'm good hearted, too."

"I believe you are."

"Cinch. You ain't seen our friend Breen lately, have you?"

Marie's eyes clouded for a moment.

"Why mention him?" she asked.

"I dunno. Every time I think of him, I think of the day he had you by the wrist. Don't never let him get you where you ain't got protection."

"Why do you say that, Brick?"

"Because he ain't to be trusted, that's why."

"He and dad are old friends."

"That won't make no difference to Jim Breen."

"What do you know about Jim Breen?"

Brick shut his jaw tightly. He did not want to tell her what he knew about Breen. She repeated her question.

"I can't tell you, Marie. You try bein' afraid of him, that's all."

Marie did not question him further, but turned the conversation into other channels. They tied the team in front of a store, and Marie did a little shopping while they waited for the stage. Brick did not get far away from her. He saw the Abelardo brothers in town, and also Campbell, the sheriff. Brick would have liked to see that reward notice for Silent Slade. He wondered if Harp Harris' name was on it as sheriff of Sun Dog.

MARIE and Brick were standing in front of the store when the stage came in. The tired horses halted in front of the little post office, and the driver assisted the lone passenger to alight. It was a girl about the same size as Marie, and they embraced each other joyously.

Brick stayed near the buggy until after they had greeted each other, and then went over to the stage to get the baggage.

"Brick," said Marie softly, "I want you to meet Miss McKee."

Brick turned so quickly that he almost fell down. Juanita McKee was staring at him, as though he were a ghost. Brick took a deep breath.

"Pleased to meetcha, Miss McKee," he said huskily.

"Well," Juanita swallowed thickly, forcing a smile, "thank you."

Marie did not appear to notice anything wrong, but went on chattering while Brick went to get the bags. He placed them in the buggy and was adjusting the harness when the two girls climbed in. Brick wondered what irony of fate ever sent Juanita McKee down into that country. Marie explained as they drove away.

"Juanita and I went to school together," she said. "We have always corresponded since that time, and I wanted her to come down and visit with me."

"That's great," said Brick foolishly, but he did not look around.

The two girls chattered all the way out to the rancho. Maxwell had never met Juanita, but he gave her a friendly welcome.

"Gee, she's a good looker," exclaimed Johnny Snow, as he helped Brick unhitch the team. "Where's she from?"

"Marie didn't say."

"I s'pose she's engaged to some feller. That's always my luck. The next time they pull off a dance in Sicomoro, let's me and you take the two girls."

Brick smiled thinly.

"You don't exactly hate girls, do you, Brick?" asked Johnny.

"Why?"

"Don't a pretty face get you enthused?"

"No-o-o, I can't say it does."

"Uh-huh. Well, everybody to their tastes. What's her name?"

"McKee."

"Thasso? I wonder if she's any relation to Scotty McKee, who used to own the One Oak *cantina* in Sicomoro?"

"Might be."

"Well, you're sure interested, cowboy. When do we go down to Gomez Springs?"

"I don't know, Johnny."

"You say when."

Later in the evening, Brick encountered Juanita on the back veranda of the ranch house.

"I've been trying to get a word alone with you," she said. "How in the world do you happen to be here?"

"It just happened," smiled Brick. "I've been here quite a little while, Juanita. It shore was a shock to see you."

"It was a shock to me," she said seriously. "Nobody in Marlin City knows where you are. Harp Harris is the sheriff now."

"And it was Harp who—you knew there was a reward for Silent?"

She nodded slowly.

"They are posted all over the country up there. The county commissioners got them out. There seemed to be some hitch about appointing Harp. I saw his wife before I left. She said she'd be willing for Harp to remain a deputy, if you could only come back. And Soapy Caswell came out to see me. He thinks a lot of you and Silent. When Marie wrote me to come and make her a visit, I couldn't refuse. I wanted to get away from up there."

"I suppose they don't think much of me in Sun Dog."

"I'm afraid not, Brick. The prosecuting attorney wanted to arrest you. He didn't know you had left there. I suppose the people are about evenly divided in their feelings. Mrs. Wesson says that you did just the right thing. She's a good soul."

"The best in the world, Juanita."

"Have you ever heard from Silent?"

"No," said Brick honestly. "I have never heard a word from him."

Juanita sighed deeply.

"I've wondered where he is. You never thought he was guilty, did you?"

"I turned him loose, didn't I?"

"Would you have turned him loose if he had been guilty?"

"I don't know. Your father was dead. Nothin' could ever bring him back again, and Silent was my best friend. What is duty anyway? Is the link of friendship so weak that a man made duty can break it? I violated my oath of office; sacrificed my standin' with honest men. But what of it? I'm the loser—if there's any loss. The people will soon forget it; but if I had gone ahead with my duty—would I have ever forgotten it? That's my argument, Juanita."

"I know how you feel, and I've wanted to thank you. Do these people know where you are from?"

"Not exactly. I don't want them to know because—well, I've got a chance to work out somethin' down here. I can't explain it to you."

"That's all right, Brick. I'll have to go back now, or Marie will be looking for me."

As Brick started back for the bunkhouse he met a Yaqui Indian who had slipped like a shadow into the patio, his bare feet making no sound on the old flags.

"Señor Maxwell," he said in a soft voice. "A *carta*."

"What kind of a cart?" asked Brick.

The Yaqui exhibited a sealed envelope.

"Oh, yeah—a *carta*. That must mean letter."

"*Sí, señor.*"

Brick indicated the doorway.

"You'll find him in there."

"*Gracias, señor.*"

BRICK went on to the bunkhouse, where he found Johnny Snow putting strings on an old guitar. He grinned widely.

"Goin' to serenade the girls," he said, chuckling to himself. "The rest of the bunch headed for Sicomoro."

Brick nodded and sprawled on his bunk to smoke a cigaret.

"An Injun just brought a *carta* to Maxwell," he said. Johnny laughed softly, as he tested a string.

"Talkin' *Español* already, eh? What was he, a Yaqui?"

"I suppose so."

"Brought a letter to the old man, eh? You never heard me play 'La Paloma', didja? I can sure make you hear the doves. That's my only tune. Slim taught me how to play that one. He's a dinger on a guitar—plays like a Mexican."

Johnny managed to tune it, but his efforts were far from musical. He gave up in disgust and they played two handed seven up instead. Brick had been in the bunkhouse about an hour when Marie came to the door, knocking timidly.

"I was afraid you might be in bed," she said, when Brick opened the door. She glanced around the room. Johnny grinned and laid down his cards.

"Where are the rest of the boys?" she asked.

"They went to town," replied Johnny. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I'm foolish, but—a Yaqui brought dad a note tonight. He put on his riding clothes and went away without telling me where he was going, but I found the note on the floor in his room."

She handed Brick the note, which read:

Come down here at once. This is important.
—BREEN

"Gone down to Gomez Springs," said Johnny. "Why, that's all right."

"Mebbe," said Brick shortly. "Mebbe not, too."

"Oh, I don't know," said Marie nervously. "Something is worrying dad all the time—and he took his gun. It always hangs in a belt near the head of his bed, but it is gone."

"Well," said Brick slowly, "me and Johnny will go down to Gomez Springs and see what we can see, Marie. I hope everythin' is all right."

"But you don't think it is, Brick."

"Well, don't you worry about him. Johnny, get your gun."

"Is that supposed to be funny?" asked Johnny.

"I hope it will be somethin' to laugh at."

He turned to Marie.

"You go to bed and don't worry. Lock every darned door tight, and don't come outside until we tell you it's us."

"What's the idea?" queried Johnny quickly.

"Just my idea of humor. C'mon, Sancho Panza."

"That sounds like a Spanish cuss word," said Johnny, as they trotted back to the stable.

"It ain't," laughed Brick. "Sancho Panza was the silent partner of a feller named Don Quixote, who went out to spear a windmill."

"Is that what you're goin' to do?"

"Somethin' like that, I reckon. Better pick a runnin' bronc, 'cause we might want to come north pretty danged fast."

"Don't tell me about that. Didn't me and Slim rescue a Dutchman?"

They saddled swiftly and rode away from the rancho. The road from Sicomoro to Gomez Springs ran past the Rancho del Rosa. They headed due south at a swift gallop. Only a couple of monuments, invisible at night, marked the boundary line, but Johnny told Brick when they were out of the States.

They slowed down, but talked little. They did not meet any one in that three mile ride from the Border. Johnny

knew the town very well, and Brick explained that they had better leave their horses in a secluded spot, but where they could get at them fairly quick in case of emergency.

Johnny led the way and they tied their horses well off the main street, but not over a long block from the big *cantina* and gambling house. They sauntered easily around to the main street, which was not over two blocks long. No one paid any attention to them.

They crossed the street and approached the big *cantina*. There were no curtains on the dirty windows. Men were going in and out of the place, and other men lounged around the entrance, all conversing in Spanish. Brick and Johnny, their sombreros drawn low over their faces, loitered at a window long enough to see Bob Maxwell and Jim Breen at the bar.

While the two cowboys were watching, the two men left the bar and crossed the room to a stairway at the left.

"Gone up to a room," grunted Brick. "I wish I had a chance to hear what was said?"

"Let me get some of this straight," whispered Johnny. "What's all the fuss about the the old man comin' down here? What's the danger?"

Brick motioned for him to follow, and they circled the rear of the building. It was dark around there, but Brick found that there was an outside stairway which led to a rear door on the second story. It was a temptation for Brick to sneak up that stairway, but he decided to stay where he was and play safe for a while.

"Here's the old man's horse," whispered Johnny. It was tied to an old fence near the rear door.

They moved ahead to where they could look down an alley to the main street, but came back to the rear of the *cantina* again. They sat down against the corner of the adjoining building and Brick told Johnny what he knew about Bob Maxwell; and about the missing diamonds.

"Didja ever see such hair on a dog!" snorted Johnny. "How much of that didja hear from the ladder the other night?"

"Enough to make me afraid of what might happen to Maxwell."

"I'll be a liar," breathed Johnny. "The old man a smuggler."

"Sh-h-h!" whispered Brick.

Some one had opened the upper doorway and the hinges creaked. Some one was whispering. Came the soft shuffle of feet on the stairway, the grunt of some one carrying a heavy burden, the creak of the stairs.

"That last drink shore got him," said a voice softly.

"Shut up," warned a voice. "Are you sure there's a rope on his saddle?"

"Hold up his feet. Where's that damn' horse?"

A man laughed breathlessly. Brick and Johnny froze against the side of the building. They were not over thirty feet from the horse.

"Whoa," grunted a voice. "Somebody hold that horse, will you?"

A rope hissed and subdued conversation followed for several moments.

"That's good. He won't come off. You stay here, Berg, while we get the rest of the horses."

"He's too drunk," said another. "Oh, well, you're the boss."

Three men passed within six feet of Brick and Johnny. They could see their dark bulk against the light from the street as they went down the alley.

Brick squeezed Johnny's arm as a signal to stay where he was, and got cautiously to his feet. As noiselessly as possible he stepped across the alley. He bumped into the wall, swore huskily, and came stumbling around the corner. There was no attempt to go silently now. Brick was playing drunk in the dark.

"*Que es?*" asked Berg, as Brick staggered toward him.

"*Buenas noches*," said Brick thickly. It was the one greeting he remembered just then.

"Go on back, you drunken bum," growled Berg. "*Vamos.*"

There was the sound of a blow, a grunt of surprise, then Brick's voice, speaking softly—

"Johnny? All set, kid."

TO BE CONTINUED

POWDER *and* RUM

By ARTHUR WOODWARD

IN THE days when every man had a horn of powder hanging from the peg beside his flintlock, the black grains of the "Devil's dust" had more than one use besides that for which it was originally intended.

At that time, powder making was not as complicated as it is now, and the common explosive used in muskets and rifles contained quite a bit of sulphur. Consequently, in times of sickness, as at Valley Forge for example, in 1778, in the spring after the long, hard winter, when the huts in which the men had been quartered needed fumigation, the order was given:

"Officers are to see that the mud plastering around the Hutts to be removed and every other method taken to render them as airy as possible. They will also have the powder of a Musquet Cartridge burnt in each Hutt dayly to purify the Air, or a little Tar if it can be procured. The Commissary of military Stores will provide blank Cartridges for this purpose."

On the other hand, men going into battle sometimes, as at the Lower Fort in the Schoharie country when the Tories and Indians were attacking, were given rum sweetened with gunpowder to divest them of fear. This was a common beverage in former times when hostile armies were about to conflict. The liquor was thought to embolden, while the powder maddened the warrior; and judging from the words of the woman who passed this drink around, some of the boys were badly in need of a bracer. She further observes, "When the glass was presented to the soldiers at the pickets, the hands of some trembled so as scarcely to hold it."

At other times, gunpowder mixed with water made a fine war paint, or a makeshift for ink.

As a condiment it was not to be ignored. Men frequently used it in place of salt. This practise continued until comparatively recent times. I can well remember my grandfather who served on the plains stating that the best piece of meat he ever ate was one he had in his haversack where loose powder had fallen.

Then too there is the tale to the effect that on the Frontier, when men were bitten by rattlesnakes, the heroic measure of applying gunpowder and a match to the wound after it had been cut to bleed freely, was often adopted.

The EDUCATION *of* CAPTAIN SUTHERLAND

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

An Annapolis Man Aboard a Freighter

THE STORY seems very unreasonable, but its truth is beyond question. I had part of it from Bouverie, the then American consul at Bahia, and part from Captain Smithers of the *Tonquin*, who was then third mate on Sutherland's ship. The whole affair is principally interesting in showing that different men must be handled in different ways, and that qualities required for command in one branch of a profession may be totally useless in another. Which some men never learn.

You must understand first of all that between the merchant service and the Navy there exists a deep and undying feud. Naval men regard merchant men with something of the same lofty scorn that a soldier regards a civilian; while merchant men regard Naval men with a contempt that goes beyond speech. It is the firm belief of every merchant seaman that the Navy contains no sailors, and

it was this fixed belief that almost caused every master mariner afloat to perish with apoplexy when, during the late war, he discovered the Government had placed each port under a Naval officer to whom he must go for orders, advices and permissions. This was an insult the merchant service has never forgotten, equivalent to making a man a public laughing stock.

That was the way Timmins felt about it when he heard that Sutherland was going as master of the *Camden Hall*, and when he further learned that Sutherland had been a Naval man. Timmins was five feet seven inches tall, built like a barrel, gray eyed, iron jawed and sandy haired. He was also forty years old and had been at sea twenty-five years. He was a perfect mate, as perfect a mate as he would have been a failure as master. He knew this and was generally content to accept the fact that he would end as a mate, but he liked to have captains over him whom he could respect and with whom he could feel comfortable. If such were not forthcoming, Timmins allowed the world to know his feelings and, as his feelings were, so he acted. One or two masters of whom he did not approve had already had themselves transferred to other vessels. They would have transferred Timmins himself but for the fact that the line's general manager and the big mate had sailed together years before, and Timmins had served the company so long it was accepted that he was a fixture.

"Think of it," he said to the second mate, one Barton. "A damned Naval man! Annapolis first, then nose wiper on a cruiser. Had charge of a gunboat once, I hear. His daddy's bought into the line, so sonny has t' quit the Navy and get a service ticket. One voyage as mate he's made and now it's a command for him. I've broken in cubs before for the line, but I'm damned if I'll hold up a Navy man. Annapolis! We'll show him what a ship is."

Sutherland came aboard just before the *Camden Hall* sailed for South America, and according to Smithers, then the young third mate, the new skipper was a nice looking guy.

"About five foot ten, I'd say. Wasn't much older'n me, twenty-eight or nine, I guess, and he had a voice like a girl's almost, soft and drawling. Didn't look as if he could stand much. Pink faced and all dressed up. Gloves, lavender tie and handkerchief, tan button shoes. We had half the shipping in port giving us the laugh. Fine thing, wasn't it? Naval man trying t' run a freighter! You ought to have heard Timmins carry on."

TIMMINS met the new arrival at the head of the gangway. The mate was in a gray flannel shirt, all sweat stained, with the sleeves rolled up. He had a dirty, white topped cap stuck over one ear and his old serge pants looked fit for the junk heap. He put his great hands on his hips so that his hairy, tattooed arms bulged out, squinted up at the younger man and chewed steadily on his quid, the tobacco juice running down his chin.

"Well?" he said. "An' where in hell did you spring from?"

"I'm Captain Sutherland," remarked the other pleasantly. "I suppose the office informed you I was coming aboard today?"

"So you're Captain Sutherland?" was all Timmins said. He ran a cold eye up and down the new master. "Well, well!"

And then he did something for which any experienced man would have called him down for then and there. He spat calmly into the scuppers, turned away and went forward, leaving the *Camden Hall's* new master standing there at the head of the gangway, a little flushed and with slightly narrowed eyes. The steward came forward with a trace of a grin, introduced himself and showed the captain to his room before going down on the dock to gather the baggage. Thus that incident passed.

The first meal in the saloon together was a funny affair. The new master sat at the head of the table and ate in

silence. Timmins ignored him entirely, talking to the second mate or the chief engineer and eating noisily as always. The others were in a quandary for a while, waiting to see how the skipper took it, but as he showed no signs of attempting to check the mate it was not long before every one else ignored him too. The second mate in particular, an admirer, even a toady of the mate, took special pains to show that as far as he was concerned the real master of the *Camden Hall* was Mr. Timmins, who was not a Navy sailor either. The skipper's cheeks went a bit red when this subtle remark was made, but still he said nothing.

"Ain't even got th' guts t' squawk," announced Timmins disgustedly some time later. "Where he comes from if a man gets hardboiled all he has t' do is t' trot out the guard or something and clap him in irons. He's got all sorts of help behind him, the whole United States! He can sit in a chair and send a man up for a few months 'ard labor, easy as winking. Well, freighters ain't run that way, an' you don't learn how by going to Annapolis. We'll have him trotting back to his gunboat once this trip's over."

There can be no doubt that Mr. Timmins put his whole heart and soul into being disagreeable during the run down to the Canal. He never spoke to the captain unless he was absolutely compelled, and when he did it was merely a growl that slipped from one corner of his mouth. He handled the ship as he pleased, and when it came to deciding upon courses and such he acted as if the new master were entirely ignorant of navigation. The rest of the officers quite naturally began to regard the skipper as a joke. They might have stood off as neutrals and watched with some enjoyment while the mate and Sutherland battled it out, but firm set in their craw was that objectionable and insulting fact that they were commanded by a Naval man, and they took no pains to hide their resentment.

It got so bad that even the steward was heard to speak sharply when the captain asked him something, and this elicited a protest from the chief engineer, who was callous enough normally to suit even Timmins.

"What of it?" said Timmins. "Am I supposed t' trot around with diapers for every midshipman I runs across? If he can't handle a steward he deserves all he gets and it's a cinch he'll never handle a freighter. Don't get it in your head th' steward's a-going t' get fresh with any one else. If he opens his gap round me I'll bust him!"

In the meantime Sutherland was keeping quiet. After the first day or so he ceased to redden whenever he was offended. He seemed to settle into a sort of shell, to withdraw himself mentally from all the ship. He spoke seldom unless first addressed. He gave no orders. He made no suggestions, no protests at first. Each morning he appeared on the bridge during the mate's watch, neatly dressed in a new uniform. He would walk up and down, smoke his pipe and ignore the cold eye of Mr. Timmins.

He seemed to make it a point to eat in the saloon at exactly the same time as the mate, a fact which irritated Mr. Timmins more than he would admit, as he had expected the new master to order his meals sent to his room after one or two of the saloon sessions. As it was, Sutherland sat through everything.

"He knows he's ballast aboard here," Timmins declared one day. "He knows if it wasn't for his daddy he'd be fourth mate of a coast boat, slinging a suji swab. He's got enough sense t' keep quiet anyway. I'll give ten t' one he quits at Para and catches the first boat home."

It became quite the thing after that to make bets as to how long the new skipper would stick it out. And then, the day the *Camden Hall* passed through the Canal, the ship was electrified by the news that Sutherland had sent for Timmins, had actually told the steward to please ask Mr. Timmins to step up to his room.

Timmins himself was grim and scornful.

"Wants t' drop off at Colon maybe.

Or maybe he's sick. I've a notion t' send th' steward back with castor oil."

TIMMINS did not do that. In the first place he was curious to hear what Sutherland had to say. And, although he would never in the world have admitted it, he had enough innate respect for any man who wore the four gold bands, no matter what he was, to accede to a request that apparently would not make it appear that he was softening. So he went up to the bridge, chewing his quid. He lounged in the doorway of the captain's room, his thumbs in his belt, his eyes somber and slightly amused. He said nothing.

Sutherland was reading a book, according to Smithers, who was on watch at the time and craning his head over the upper bridge rail to see and hear what was toward. The captain had his legs cocked up on his desk, his swivel chair tilted back, the book in his hands and his pipe between his teeth. He was, as always, fully dressed, a fact upon which Timmins had often commented with considerable force as being an attempt on the part of a Naval man to show up real sailors who had to work, and therefore had to wear dungarees.

When Timmins appeared Sutherland removed his feet from the desk, sat upright in his chair and laid down his book.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Timmins?" he said, very quietly. Timmins turned his head and spat far and accurately over the rail.

"I'm chewing," he said, just as if he had all his life made it a point never to enter a cabin when so engaged.

Sutherland nodded, and taking his pipe from his mouth began to tap the edge of his desk very gently with the stem.

"I realize you don't like me, Mr. Timmins," he began. "I understand you don't care for Naval men at all, as I understand you resent my being made master of this vessel, possibly because it checked your own promotion. I don't know. I wish to say, however, that I realize a cargo vessel is a vastly different craft to handle from, say, a gunboat; and bearing this in mind I have tried to keep my eyes and ears open in an attempt to learn. I do not expect to be an efficient master for some time yet, and I had anticipated when I first was given this ship that I would have to leave matters very much in charge of my first officer. This I have done and I am perfectly willing to continue doing so. I know you are a very capable man—but this nonsense must stop!"

"Nonsense?" Timmins spat overside again and looked grimly severe.

"This deliberate insulting of myself. You must know it is ruining discipline, even if you don't care personally how I feel about it. The ship is becoming a bear garden. If I had you in the Navy I'd know how to deal with you, but I admit my helplessness and ignorance in this profession. I want to be decent about things. I'm willing to meet you more than half way. Now can't we forget what's gone and done and start off on a different footing? I can tell you I'll be extremely grateful for your help and I promise you that when we get back to San Francisco I'll do my best to get you a command, if it's that which is upsetting you, apart from this Navy stuff."

Smithers says he thought Timmins was going to burst. His neck swelled. He shook like a leaf, and when he spoke his voice was so hoarse it sounded like sandpaper on wood.

"Me? You'd know how t' deal with *me* if you 'ad me in the Navy? Me? I was running ships afore you got out th' nursery! You ain't even a good able seaman yet! So you'll get me a command will ye? Me?"

He choked. He turned and walked slowly to the rail, spat prodigiously and returned to the cabin door.

"If you want t' be a sailor I'll make you one. Get them duds off an' climb inter some dungarees. We allus starts off deck boys shining brass!"

Sutherland jumped to his feet then and his voice grew slightly hysterical.

"Damn you, don't you talk to me like

that! I'll log you! I'll pay you off! As long as I'm master of this ship you'll treat me as such or take the consequences!"

Timmins laughed and grew abruptly easy and insolent. He had caused the skipper to lose his temper and for the moment at least he dominated him.

"Consequences?" he jeered. "You log me an' I'll make you th' laughing stock of th' coast. Pay me off? Where'll you do that? You couldn't get another mate in any o' them dago ports, chances are, even if th' consul'd let you ditch me. You can't go home without me. The second'd be a flop as mate. You'd likely lose the ship or 'ave the finest scramble of a cargo stowing you ever saw. Don't talk foolish, son. Be a man! If you take my tip you'll trot off back t' that gunboat. Another thing, don't keep sending for me. I'm busy!"

It was Sutherland who choked this time, but before he could think of a reply Timmins stalked away, mad as a wet hen. Below in the saloon he let go, stamping up and down and swearing.

"Me? Wishes 'e 'ad me in th' Navy! Th' pup! Comes aboard an' don't scarce know port from starboard, an' I'm supposed t' say 'yes, sir' an' treat it like it was human. Pay me off, will he? Well, maybe he can but he'll know he's been on a 'ard case packet before I'm through. I been gentle with 'im so far, jest been saying things but keeping the work going. We'll see how he can handle it. Me? Wishes 'e 'ad *me* in th' Navy so he could handle me? Yah! Needs th' whole bloomin' United States behind him before he can command anything. What sort of tripe is that?"

The ship agreed. And each man felt he had been personally insulted. To hell with the Navy!

AN OMINOUS calmness brooded over the *Camden Hall* as she ploughed her way through the blue waters of the Caribbean, steamed along the South American coast, rounded Trinidad Island and the tip of the continent and entered the South Atlantic. The mate appeared on the bridge exactly at four o'clock, when his watch commenced, and disappeared below again when it ended. Report had it he spent his off time lying in his bunk, reading and chewing, and for at least two days he busied himself in the officer's bathroom doing his washing.

"I been mate fifteen years," he told the chief engineer, "an' I needs a rest. I been holding down me watches and running th' ship besides. Now we'll let Mister Sutherland 'ave a crack."

But Mister Sutherland did nothing. He appeared each morning for breakfast, each noon for dinner, each evening for supper, and they were funereal meals. The mate ate as stolidly and as silently as the master and no one else who was present cared to say a word. Between meals the skipper paced the lower bridge, an empty pipe gripped rigidly between his teeth, his uniform immaculate as always and his hands clasped determinedly behind him. More than ever now he seemed to withdraw into a shell, to hold himself mentally aloof from the rest of the vessel, though now there was a hint of unbending defiance in his stiff legged walk and in the somber smoldering of his blue eyes. If he realized he had made a bad blunder there was nothing about him that could be taken as a sign of admission or regret, though several of the officers thought he was getting thinner, almost strained about the mouth and the jaw.

The ship was what suffered. It is a first mate's duty not only to serve his two daily watches on the bridge, but also to parcel out work to the crew, make continual tours of inspection, see to it that running and standing gear is kept sound, decks clean, holds ventilated, wells sounded, and in port personally to oversee the proper stowing of the cargo.

There are other things a mate must do as well. Sometimes he is expected to keep the ship's papers in order and, when serving under an efficient master, must often act as a soothing agent and arrange to be around to be sworn at when any-

thing goes wrong. In short, a first mate is the ship's husband, and when he decides he has lost interest in his job there is bound to be a serious mixup in the domestic circle.

The bosun, coming to the mate for the day's orders, was met with a cold eye and a distinct—

"What th' hell d' you want?"

The second mate told him to go see the Old Man. And Smithers, the Third, who was very young and cheeky then, advised him to follow the example of his betters and turn in. This, the bosun eventually decided, was the sensible course, so after scrupulously washing down each morning he left the crew to its own devices and retired to his bunk to read and smoke and contemplate the strangeness of life. The crew brought their mattresses on to the forecastle head and by ten o'clock each morning the *Camden Hall* had a Sunday-like appearance. The infection spread through the vessel. No man did any more than he absolutely had to do for his own comfort and well being.

The cooks worked solely because they would have heard from a hungry crew if they had not. The engine room and fire room crowds kept at it somewhat languidly and there were watches when the number of revolutions per minute dropped to a level that made even the calloused and indifferent engineers ashamed to look the piston rods in the face. There was one slogan, forward and aft, aloft and below. To hell with the Navy! The more the men thought about it the more magnificent a feud it seemed. To hell with the Navy!

And still Captain Sutherland did nothing. He acted in fact as if everything was quite normal, or as if he was merely waiting his time. He did once call the second mate to him and suggest it might be well if the paintwork of the lower bridge bulkheads were washed.

"Oh, you'll have to see the mate about that," smirked the second. "I ain't got nothing t' do with th' men."

The captain clamped his teeth upon his pipe stem once more and resumed his steady pacing. The helmsman was reported to have laughed outright.

NOW ACCORDING to Smithers the skipper was not the only man aboard who suffered. Timmins, for all his reading and chewing and apparent resignation to his chosen part, was boiling over most of the time. Fifteen years now he had run ships —ten years on the *Camden Hall*—and he had been a good mate, a first class mate. All the coast knew it as well as he knew it himself and it was more even than a matter of pride with him to have his vessel constantly in tip-top condition.

It was a religion. Crews to him were just machines to do ship's work; individual men were to be ranked according to their ability to wield a chipping hammer, paint brush or oil rag with speed and precision. Even the great line was merely something that sent aboard rope, canvas, holystones and other deck stores, all for the well being of the *Camden Hall.*

And now here was his beloved vessel going all to pieces beneath his eyes. Spots of rust appeared on rails and houses after the heavy tropical rains. Stains, that only holystoning could take out, were left in the beautifully white planking, untouched by the perfunctory morning wash down. Scarcely half the winch and derrick gear had been greased and looked over. The forepeak needed cleaning out; dunnage lay in No. 2; the boats should be painted. There were a hundred and one things crying for immediate attention, and here was Mr. Timmins, the best mate on the coast, lying idle in his bunk, chewing and reading good time away because of a Naval man.

He might have rested more or less easy with the last thought to help him, but for the continual sight of the crew, his crew, lolling around on their mattresses on the forecastle head. Every time he came on deck to go to the bridge, he fumed and swore beneath his breath. Wait till all this nonsense was over! He'd show 'em! What did they think this was, a tourist

party? It must have been all he could do not to capitulate at such moments.

"Soon as I figure on takin' a rest th' damned ship goes t' hell," he said to Smithers, rubbing his great hands up and down his thighs as if they itched to get hold of something. "Don't let me find you nor that second tryin' t' be funny," he added darkly. "I want that chart room kep' decent and everythin' else up there lookin' right. Otherwise you'll 'ear about it." He ended with a gloomy, "We'll go inter Para looking like an outhouse. I only 'opes there's no packets there what knows me."

"Well, you can always tell 'em we're being run by the Navy," suggested Smithers. That seemed to brighten Mr. Timmins up. To hell with the Navy!

THE *CAMDEN HALL* reached Para in course of time with her internal affairs unchanged. And it was in Para that the defection of Mr. Timmins grew actually serious—even threatening to Sutherland—for Mr. Timmins' first move when the ship was properly tied alongside was to dress up and go ashore. It is true he sent the steward up to the captain first with what ship's papers he had, and a complete plan of the cargo; but as young Sutherland's knowledge of cargo stowage and cargo unloading was mostly theoretical, this did not help much.

"And tell 'im," said Mr. Timmins grimly, "I'll be back at four in time for my watch. That is if I'm sober."

The agents came aboard; the customs officers came aboard; the boss stevedore came aboard. And there was no mate to meet them with a rough handclasp, a package of cigarets and a drink or two to smooth away official questions and difficulties. Instead there was a very young, very red faced and very bewildered man in a captain's uniform, gazing helplessly at a pile of papers and muttering to himself. There were a couple of distressing hours before the agents took charge and started things to working. But by this time the second mate had dressed up and gone ashore also, as had most of the engineers. Young Smithers was the only officer outside of the man in charge of the donkey boiler to remain aboard. By ones and twos what few of the crew had money drifted uptown.

"Some one's got to watch the holds," said the agents. "You'll have half the cases busted open and a lot of stuff stolen if you don't. And then when you load you'll have to superintend the stowing, else it's likely you'll have cargo shifting at sea, or maybe a lot of it spoiled by the time you get home."

"Very well," said Sutherland grimly, his face not at all red and embarrassed now but very white and set. He borrowed some dungarees from young Smithers and took over the forward holds, leaving Smithers the after ones. And so in a fashion, below in the heat and dust, with the sweat running down his back and stinging his eyes, Captain Sutherland began to learn how to handle a freighter.

"I can tell you," said Smithers, "that was when I first began to like him. He was soft as a sponge and he had gold braid on the brain, but he stuck it out. We worked cargo thirty straight hours and the only time he took off was to eat and drink, and to go up to the consul's and clear ship, which he did when the mate came back aboard and took over the holds just for the period of his usual watch. The skipper was about dead by the time we dropped down the river. Missed two meals in the saloon and when he did appear he looked like he'd been in a fight."

"He won't last," stated Mr. Timmins scornfully. "If he don't quit at th' first decent port th' line'll fire 'im fer all of his daddy. Them forward holds is stowed something disgraceful. And he's put cedar logs in th' shelter decks what was reserved fer cargo at Montevideo—thought he'd be smart. He tried t' get th' consul t' find 'im a mate. Jest as if licensed men c'n be picked up like bananas down here. Yah! Wait till we get t' Bahia."

It was in Bahia that the crash came.

The *Camden Hall* stayed there over two weeks and to Captain Sutherland it must have seemed like an age. Mr. Timmins went ashore as usual. The second mate went ashore with him. The engineers went ashore. And almost to a man, ashore went the crew. In its deep wisdom the American Government some years ago passed a law, still extant, which made it compulsory for masters of American ships to pay to each man in each foreign port one half of the wages then due him. Seamen being what they are, things happen. The saloons and the girls do a roaring trade, and until the men are broke again vessels lie deserted, save for the stevedores.

All this and more was the lot of the *Camden Hall.* Men drifted back aboard by two and threes, drunk and singing and brawling. They ate, put on clean shirts perhaps, and went ashore again. The engineers staged a fight in the forward well deck. Mr. Timmins began to forget to return even to stand his regular watch. He usually appeared at early dawn with the second mate in tow, to bellow and roar around the saloon for the steward to make coffee.

Now, bad as are the American marine laws, and much as they limit the power and authority of a master, a strong man can still hold his crew in control and, if he is so fortunate as to have a strong mate too, can even subdue it. But Captain Sutherland was not a strong man, not yet at least, and Mr. Timmins was, to use his own expression, on his first good spree in years. It is true he sometimes lamented the condition of things, and Smithers avers there was one night when he almost wept to contemplate the broken cases and the shiftless stowage of the holds; to see the grimy, jumbled condition of the deck; to hear the men amusing themselves by throwing empty bottles against the once immaculate paintwork of the bridge house bulkhead. But he remained firm.

"Let 'im fix it. He's master an' drawing pay as such. If 'e had me in th' Navy he'd know 'ow t' handle me. Well, let 'im learn freight ship stuff. To hell with the Navy!"

"To hell with the Navy!" agreed the second mate.

"Well, he seems to be sticking it," put in Smithers. "And he ain't done any whining yet."

"Yah!" said Mr. Timmins, but he was obviously growing more and more irritated.

THE FOURTH night they were in Bahia young Sutherland, worn out from a day in the holds, sleeping wearily in his room, was awakened by a terrific crash from below. He lay still for a while, tense, a little cold feeling possibly under his heart when he heard Mr. Timmins swearing with great gusto at something or some one. There was another crash, and another. Eventually something gave or broke, and comparative silence fell.

"Th' mate'd lost his room key," explained Smithers. "Came aboard four parts squiffed and tried to get into his cabin. I told him to go and wake the Old Man up and ask for a pass key but that only started him hopping. Said he didn't need no Navy man to open a door for him. He got the big bench out of the pantry and started to use it like a battering ram. When the bench broke he grabbed one of the fire axes and split the door right. He seemed to think he might as well make a good job of things so he pretty well wrecked the saloon too. You ought to have seen the place. And then once he'd got the door busted he decided he didn't want to go to bed, so him and the second mate and the fourth engineer sat up and guzzled the rest of the night and then went ashore again."

This incident called forth a protest from Sutherland the next day. When Timmins drifted aboard about noon, in a half sober, genial condition, Sutherland met him at the gangway. The mate was dressed up, seeming on the verge of bursting out of his blue serge suit. His sleeves stretched tightly over his great muscles,

his thick hairy wrists stuck out. His soft hat was a shapeless blob of felt rammed over his sandy hair, and the two days' growth of sandy beard covering his rocky face did not improve his appearance. Sutherland was lean and drawn looking in stained dungarees. The sweat had soaked through until it stood in great dark patches across his back and chest and down his thighs. His voice was raspy, seeming about to crack, but there was no sign of hysteria in his eyes which were cold blue flames.

"Next time you need your key, Mr. Timmins," he said, "I'd be glad if you'd ask for it. There's no need to wreck the ship. This isn't a bear garden."

"Is that so?" said the mate. He spat tobacco juice on the deck right at the captain's feet. "I s'pose if you 'ad me in th' Navy you'd know how t' handle me, eh?"

"I'd certainly see to it you kept sober!" snapped Sutherland.

The second mate who was with Timmins laughed aloud and said a fellow ought to wear his gloves else he'd spoil his hands.

Sutherland turned on him with a furious gesture.

"You keep your mouth shut!"

Timmins ran the back of a hairy hand across his gash of a mouth and squinted up at Sutherland, who was white as a ghost and shaking badly.

"If you 'ad him in th' Navy you'd know how t' handle 'im, wouldn't yer?"

"You're not fit to walk a ship's deck, let alone hold a license," said Sutherland icily.

"Maybe," responded Timmins, still grinning. "But I never 'ad t' have th' United States behind me before I c'd run a tin can like this."

"It's very obvious that both of us can't stay on this vessel," cried Sutherland.

He had grown very rigid now and his fists were clenched tightly at his sides. Timmins nodded and grinned again.

"Well, I'm sure glad you've gotta hold of that fact," he said. He spat again and moved off to his room. Sutherland took a step after him, as if to drag him back or protest, but apparently he thought better of it for he abruptly relaxed and strode forward to the nearest hold where the stevedores were working.

BOUVERIE, the then American consul at Bahia, was a man of very clear vision and infinite understanding, which is the reason perhaps, he afterward became ambassador to Rome. He was not greatly surprised, he said, when Captain Sutherland of the *Camden Hall* came to see him one hot afternoon looking as if he had just risen from a fever bed, or been through a long bout of insomnia.

Rumors had reached Bouverie that all was not well with the American ship, and he had, in fact, had some difficulty already with the local police over the unfortunate occurrence of several of the *Camden Hall's* crew wrecking a beer joint near the marketplace and staging a free for all fight in one of the elevators that run from the waterfront up the hill to the town.

"I don't know what to do," Sutherland started miserably.

He was no longer tucked away inside a shell with a scornful contempt for what went on about him. He was a very young man in trouble and the doubt in his soul was shadowed in his eyes.

"Practically my entire crew's been ashore and drunk since we arrived.

"That's right," said Bouverie comfortably. He picked up a slip of paper and tossed it across the desk. "I was coming down to see you today. Four more men were arrested last night. Fined a hundred milreis each. Want t' pay it?"

"I had no idea there'd be all this trouble," said Sutherland, quite distressed. He added bitterly, "I'm a damned fine captain!"

"Don't choke," said Bouverie. "You've only got six men in jail. The East Coast packets double that number. Been the same for all American ships since Congress passed that fool law about paying crews in every port. Forget it. If you don't

want 'em aboard until you said, let 'em stay in the jug. Have a cigar?"

Sutherland accepted a cigar, "which he proceeded to break up between his fingers," said Bouverie later.

"It isn't only the men," muttered the captain. "My officers are as bad. The mate's been against me from the first and the others are following his example. He insults me before the men, leaves all the ship work to me. He seems to be angry because I was a Naval man."

"Oh!" said Bouverie, sudden light breaking upon him. "So that's what the trouble is."

"Have you heard?" Sutherland wanted to know.

"Heard? The whole damned waterfront's heard. No wonder you've got things in a mess. Naval man, eh? Well, well!"

"Oh, I admit I knew very little about freighters when I began," said Sutherland, reddening. "But I was willing to learn; I am learning. The trouble seems to be I can't get in touch with the men. It's ridiculous really, but every one acts as though because I've been in the Navy I've no business aboard."

"Well, Navy men are rather helpless in the merchant service," observed Bouverie brutally. "I've had cases here before. You see they come from ships manned by anything up to a thousand men and expect to run vessels of almost the same size and with crews of thirty or forty in exactly the way they've been accustomed. There's a change in discipline too. In the Navy, if a man begins to perform you can slam him in the brig, but the merchant service's different. You haven't much authority there, at least not these days. You can log a man and give him a bad discharge, which he promptly tears up, and that's about all. Command's really more of a personal matter. You've got to stand alone. You've got to be a diplomat and a wet nurse. You've got to be able to keep men tamed down and working with nothing but bluff to help you. You've got to make them like you. Don't ask me how it's done. I don't know. Each crew's a different problem. All I know is there are captains who can do it."

"I don't see any way out," confessed Sutherland, very troubled. "You see as far as officers are concerned, I've been used to dealing with gentlemen, and the sort I've got now—"

"Roughnecks!" snapped Bouverie. "Treat 'em like roughnecks. Put your foot down. It's likely enough you won't get away with it but you can try. If you flop you can't be any worse off than you are now."

"I THINK I might manage the men," said Sutherland, beginning to frown. "But what can I do with the mate? He and the second have been ashore drunk since we docked. They come aboard at all hours and raise cain. Wrecked the saloon one night. The engineers are starting the same thing. The men won't behave with that sort of an example before them."

"Timmins is mate with you, isn't he?" asked Bouverie. "Yes, I know him. He's been running down here these five years. This is the first time he's ever performed though. What do you want to do, pay him off?"

"What would you advise, sir?"

"I advise you to please yourself. If you can't get along with a man get rid of him, generally speaking. But this is a hell of a place to pay a man off. The docks are crowded with beachcombers. Timmins'd be weeks getting away and then he'd likely have to go as A. B. Besides that I doubt if I could pick you up another licensed man that was any good."

"I see," said Sutherland. He frowned a bit more. "No, it wouldn't be white to pay him off here if conditions are as you say. Besides I think I'd feel he'd won out if I had to get rid of him. I want to stick things out until we reach the States again. It's a matter of pride, if you like. I suppose I could log him."

Bouverie looked queerly at Sutherland.

"I suppose you could. You might disrate him too but one doesn't do that sort

of thing—very often—with men who've been in the game as long as Timmins. Of course I don't know about the Navy . . ."

"I see," said Sutherland, a little red. "I won't make that mistake then."

Bouverie nodded, pleased a little.

"That's the idea. You'll win out in time if you stand on your own feet and not depend on the log book and such. Now, how about these men in jail? Do you want them out or want them kept there until you sail?"

Sutherland's face set in lines of clear decision.

"Let them stay," he said. "I wish they'd arrest the others and keep them until we sail too. It might teach them a lesson."

"That's easy arranged," said Bouverie. "A lot of the East Coast captains fix it up as soon as they dock."

"How's that?"

"You just dish out money to the crew and then tip the police off you'd like the bunch run in as soon as they're drunk. That keeps them out of the way and out of trouble. It'll cost you just a hundred milreis a man to get 'em released, and that comes from their wages. The police are glad to oblige because the city needs the money."

"It seems a dirty trick," said Sutherland, hesitating.

"Roughnecks, my boy. You're dealing with roughnecks. You've got to talk the language they can understand. Forget Annapolis. Freighters aren't run by gentlemen."

"All right," said Sutherland.

He stood up and put out his hand. Bouverie shook it and decided the other was not going to be a pleasant companion for a while from the look in his eyes. Sutherland went away and the next morning a polite, black mustached, swarthy policeman entered the consular office with the distressing information that nineteen men of the steamer *Camden Hall* lay in jail, having had assessed against them a fine of one hundred milreis each. The charges ran from drunkeness and disturbing the peace to resisting arrest and destroying property. Did the consul wish to do anything about it?

"Let 'em stay," said Bouverie heartily. "The captain'll be down to get 'em out before the ship sails."

When Mr. Timmins heard this news he was slightly staggered.

"Ten t' one it was Bouverie put him up to it," he swore. "He'd never've had th' savvy t' think of it 'imself. Next thing y' know he'll be paying me off an' making Smithers mate. Well, let's go ashore and 'oist a few. This's the best spree I've had since I was a kid."

The second mate put on his hat.

"Maybe he's got something framed with the consul about us too," he said uneasily as they went down the gangplank together. Timmins spat profusely into the water between the ship and the deck.

"Being as 'e's a Naval man it's likely," he observed. "They'd do most anything."

Sutherland, standing by No. 3 hatch, heard this but made no comment. The second mate chuckled. Smithers said it was about then he began not only to like the skipper but also to feel sorry for him. You could not help it. He was game all right, sticking it out, though it was queer he did not give Timmins his walking papers. The rest of the officers put it down to the fact that either the skipper was afraid of Timmins, of what Timmins might do to him, or else he knew the mate stood so strong with the line that to fire him would be equivalent to firing himself. No one thought, of course, that it might be a spiritual matter inside of Sutherland himself.

IT WAS very early next morning when Mr. Timmins came aboard. He was far from being sober, but he was certainly not drunk. He did not look much like a man who had been enjoying himself. He wore a morose frown and was swearing absently at the second mate whose feet were somewhat uncertain. The fact was that for Mr. Timmins life was beginning to look very dark.

He had been certain that Sutherland would quit before now, but it seemed the young man was determined to stick in spite of everything. There had been a certain zest and anticipation in looking forward each morning to annoying the skipper, but that was palling too. Of course it was always possible to work up a glow over the idea of a Naval man in charge of the *Camden Hall*—to hell with the Navy! —but this prolonging of everything, this uncertainty, this stalemate was doing disastrous things to the *Camden Hall* herself.

It was becoming increasingly difficult for Mr. Timmins to force himself ashore each day when everywhere he looked along his beloved decks he saw chaos and dirt; when it made his professional soul writhe to see the way the cargo was being stowed; when he looked forward and saw what few men were left aboard, drunk and singing, or snoring soundly on their mattresses. It even hurt him to think of those nineteen men in jail, nineteen pairs of hands that should be busy getting the *Camden Hall* in trim. If anything, to contemplate these matters and to think they were all due to the fact there was a Naval man aboard, made Timmins' feeling against Sutherland more intense than ever. *To hell with the Navy!*

Coming aboard this morning, wrath rose and stirred in Mr. Timmins and, dragging the second mate into the saloon, he shook him savagely.

"Go and turn in, ye drunken lout!" he said.

With an incoherent and indignant protest, the second tottered away. It was then that Timmins discovered he had once again lost his key. He was starting to lift a fire ax from the bulkhead when an idea struck him. Here it was four or five o'clock in the morning with every one asleep. "Next time you need your key, Mr. Timmins, I'd be glad if you'd ask for it," the skipper had said. "There's no need to wreck the ship. This isn't a bear garden."

Fine! The skipper had the pass keys and the skipper was asleep. He would undoubtedly be annoyed if awakened. Mr. Timmins chuckled to himself and climbed up to the lower bridge. It was the first blow of his great fists on the captain's door that awoke Smithers, who dressed and prowled around to see what was going on.

Timmins was making a great deal of noise, using his boots, fists and voice. His language could be heard the length of the ship and it was not long before the captain's door opened and Sutherland stood framed in the opening, buckling his belt and dressed just in his pants and white cotton singlet, his eyes dazed with sleep.

"What's all this disturbance for, Mr. Timmins?" he said.

"Keys," replied the mate. "I've lost mine again. You made a squawk last time I opened the door meself, so I thought I'd come an' see you."

"I should think it's about time you'd stop this drinking," said Sutherland hotly. "You'll be seeing things before long."

"Of course," said the mate, leaning against the door jamb and beginning to enjoy himself, "if you 'ad me in th' Navy you'd know how t' handle me."

"That's enough," said the captain, his voice shaking a bit. "That's more than enough."

He went back into his room for a moment and got his big ring upon which hung duplicate keys for all the doors in the ship. Then he stepped past Timmins and walked steadily to the companion and so down to the saloon. The mate spat tobacco juice casually on the once white deck and followed him, his grim lips twitching a bit. Smithers trailed the pair of them to see what would happen.

Sutherland went into the saloon, crossed to the opposite door, shut it and locked it. Then he turned on all the lights. The mate came in and Sutherland brushing by him shut the remaining door and locked that too. Then he tossed the keys into a corner. Smithers had dived round outside the saloon and was gaping in through an open port, the only witness to all that transpired.

"You're a rotten dog!" said Sutherland tensely. "You've done your best to drive

me from this ship and now you're swilling liquor until you're not fit to be near. I may not be the sort of sailor you can approve of but at least I've enough self-respect to keep myself clean and to take what care I can of my ship. I ought to pay you off and leave you here to rot in the heat and the smells, but I wouldn't leave even you to become a beachcomber like those poor devils we see every day. Is that clear? I'm keeping you because I'm sorry for you! You're nothing but a damned ignorant fool and I've stood for it long enough!"

TIMMINS was standing rigid with astonishment by this time, his eyes wide. He gave a start when Sutherland finished speaking, almost as if he had been abruptly douched in cold water.

"Well," he said in a strange, uncertain sort of voice. "Well, you're coming to life. If you'd started t' talk like a man in th' beginning . . ."

Very deliberately, his face the color of ashes, Sutherland walked across to him and knocked him down!

There was a brief silence after the thud of the fall, broken only by Sutherland's breathing, short and hard so that his nostrils opened and shut and were edged with livid white. Timmins very slowly sat up, got to his knees, one hand on the carpet and the other to his mouth. Still slowly he climbed to his feet, wiped his lips and spat blood. He was quite sober now and his eyes were cold points of ice.

"Is that what they do in th' Navy?" he said softly, so softly the words were almost a whisper. "Hit a man without warning?"

"Are you going to fight?" shouted Sutherland. "Damn you! Now show me if there's anything behind that mouth! Do you have to be knocked down again?"

"Fight?" said Timmins. He laughed a little. "I'm a-going t' take you apart so yer own mother wouldn't know you. An' I didn't learn 'ow at Annapolis either!"

Sutherland let out a bitter oath, the first any man on the *Camden Hall* had heard him use, and then ran in. Timmins stood square and met him and for a few seconds they slugged at each other. Then Sutherland backed, gasping, shaken to the core with each of the stocky, solid mate's blows. He ducked a vicious jab at the jaw and made Timmins grunt with two swift hooks below the left ribs. For a while then he had things his own way, propping the mate up with his long left and occasionally whipping a right to the heart. Timmins spat blood and neither backed nor advanced, absorbing everything, his eyes still steady and cold as ice. His method was the infighting of the expert manhandler and this long distance sparring was not at all to his liking.

He began to advance with the remorselessness of a steamroller, not in a series of quick rushes, but methodically, step by step, his arms content to ward off blows, his head slightly lowered. And then abruptly he slipped beneath Sutherland's pumping fists, had his head on Sutherland's chest, and proceeded to take the younger and less experienced fighter apart.

He sank his fists into Sutherland's stomach; he hammered at his kidneys. In vain Sutherland tried to step aside, back, to get clear. The sandy head never left his chest and his own desperate fists could find no target. At the last, with a terrific upward hook Timmins literally lifted the captain from his feet and hurled him against the saloon bulkhead. It was, logically, the end of the fight.

Timmins wiped his wet forehead with a hot forearm, spat more blood on the carpet and began to feel at his jaw. He was quite astonished when Sutherland abruptly loomed before him again, choking, wheezing, swaying but trying to fight.

"Damn you!" the captain was coughing. "Damn you! Come on and fight!"

"Fight?" grated Timmins with a sudden gust of fury. "If you want more it's coming."

They closed with a thud. The mate had so far been quite cool about the whole affair, had even taken some delight in it. To think that this slender, long limbed

youngster should try to put him out, put out Timmins who was fighting tough men before Sutherland was out of the nursery, was amusing. Now Timmins was angry. Once he had put a man down he expected him to stay down, and surprisingly, this man had got up again.

Timmins' eyes were mere slits now. His sandy hair seemed to stand on end. His thick growth of sandy beard seemed to bristle. The muscles stood out in angry knots and ropes over his chest and along his arms. His neck swelled. Hard and true as pistons, disregarding any defense, his arms shot in and out. Sutherland went down again and again, and, after brief seconds, he got up. He always got up.

ONE OF his eyes was closed, his lower lip split and streaming blood. He had a cut under the right ear and dull bruises were growing down his left cheek. His singlet was in shreds, his pants torn, his knuckles raw. He was breathing in great, sick sobs and the beating of his heart was plain against his reddening ribs. When he was risen for the fourth time, very wearily and slowly, he was almost unconscious on his feet, punch drunk, gagging, weaving, blind, swinging his arms wildly. Timmins stepped back and surveyed him, cool again now and very grim, also a little curious and disturbed.

"You're licked and ye might as well take it that way," he observed, breathing hard. "Can't you stay down when you're hit! Falling around like a damned drunk. Did they teach you that at Annapolis?"

"Fight, damn you!" Sutherland was croaking, swaying like a tree in the wind and peering out of his one good eye. "Fight! You're all damned mouth!"

Timmins laughed short and hard and wiped the blood from his chin. He took Sutherland by the throat, shook him as one might shake a dog, then forced him back until he fell into one of the swivel chairs bolted to the deck around the saloon table. Sutherland struggled, choked out oaths, but the great hairy hand upon his windpipe had him helpless. He collapsed at last, went limp, and dropping his arms on the table, buried his face in them and wept tears of impotent rage and shame.

Timmins stood still for a long time, according to Smithers, who was still gaping through the open port. He stood still for a long time, did the mate of the *Camden Hall*, and then very thoughtfully, while he watched the shaking battered figure in the chair, reached round to his hip pocket, produced a plug and gnawed off a large chew.

"Well!" he said, once he had his jaws working properly, and apparently speaking to himself. "Well! You ain't much of a sailor an' you ain't nothin' t' talk about as a fighter. But I s'pose you'll learn in time."

He was silent for a spell, his thumbs in his belt. Then he scratched his head and spat tobacco juice and blood absently on the carpet.

"An' you wouldn't pay me off because you'd 'ate t' see me down among them beachcombers, hey? Well, if you ain't a bloody fool! An' they thought you c'd 'andle a freighter!"

He crossed to the shaking figure, heaved it roughly to its feet and propelled it toward the door. He retrieved the keys from the corner, unlocked the door and, after a cautious look outside, supported the captain to the bridge companion, helped him up and led him into his room where Sutherland collapsed on his settee and buried his face in his hands again. The mate spat into the cuspidor and scratched his head. He was apparently at a loss what to say.

"You'd better get cleaned up an' climb inter bed," he ventured at last. "You can't sit around an' bawl like that, 'cause you ain't in th' Navy now. Gotta be a man!"

Mr. Timmins left the captain's room in a state of great disgust and, going down to the main deck, he met the second engineer who was in an evil mood after a night's debauch. Up on the bridge young Sutherland straightened himself with a

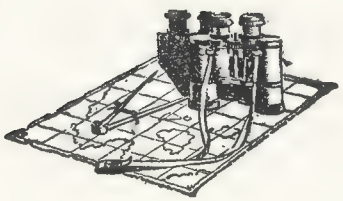
weary sigh and was staring bleakly at his raw and aching hands. He supposed it was the end. Smithers, who went up to see if he could do anything, heard him muttering to himself. The whole crew would know he had been licked and if the mate had been intolerable before, he would be doubly so now. The ship needed a good man to look after her and if he paid off Timmins there would be no one to take his place. For the good of the line it would be best for him, Sutherland, to get out himself. Timmins had been sound and conscientious before he had come, the best mate on the coast it was said. They might have got along fine together but for this ridiculous feud between the merchant service and the Navy. Well, it had to be faced. He had tried to follow Bouverie's advice and treat roughnecks like roughnecks but he had not the ability, not the physical power. He had been licked, badly. It was the absolute end.

He rose to his feet, groaning as he straightened, and then he was electrified to hear the mate's voice bellowing up from the main deck below where he was arguing with the second engineer.

"Is that so, you dirt caked spanner hound! Give me any lip and I'll bust you open! I want steam at six an' I want th' pumps full blast. This packet needs a wash, 'arbor rules or not—an' don't let me catch you spitting on th' deck again. What th' hell do you think this is, a blasted bear garden?"

SUTHERLAND is still the master of the *Camden Hall* and Timmins is still recognized as the best mate on the coast. A good many have commented on the cordial relations that appear to exist between them, which are demonstrated by the fact that Sutherland always refers to his mate as "that Irish blackguard", while Timmins has been heard to remark that his skipper's "nothing but a damned Naval man".

The most astonishing thing is that they are both perfectly sincere about it.



CRIMSON SILK

A Mystery tale of Old Japan

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

WESTGAARD woke early, with the brilliant light of day full in his eyes. He felt tired, but not inert; in the first serene moments of waking he was languid and luxurious, and explored unconsciously the joy of stretching. The sky was without a cloud, blank, but glowing white at the edge. The sun was not yet out of the hills. Birds climbed into the sky with a sharp song. Scores of smaller ones, gray almost to the point of invisibility, darted across the hillock on which he had slept, dipping in their flight from bush to bush.

The fresh air fanned his eyes open. Avoiding the glare overhead, he turned sidewise on the ground.

Northward, on the smoky blue plain, was a village of brown, violet, and shining mulberry trees. As he looked toward it a lazy bell began to beat regularly, achieving nothing more than a minor cadenced shuddering of the air. A second, with mellower and mightier tone, sent an accompanying pealing like summer thunder; it stopped, the last crash blending with the small bell until the two made a golden moan. Westgaard could almost

see the priests busy with their offices.

He stretched again, but this time took no pleasure from it. The white man knew himself to be stiff, very tired, and growing cold, despite the rising sun. More, he remembered keenly the eating shops in the last town he had walked through, remembered also why he had not been able to spend the night in a comfortable tea house.

At this a tight smile moved his lips—a smile which neither waxed nor waned but seemed frozen on his face.

He sat up stiffly and drew a sheet of paper from his pocket.

Westgaard looked at it soberly:

> *Michi ga chigai wa shinai ka* . . . You are going the wrong way. The village of Fuzetso is no place for you. Stay on the train until you are in Wakayama. Then you will be given back your money and watch. Keep away from Fuzetso. Nothing at all is there.

Westgaard closed his eyes, reviewing everything that had happened.

He had left the Asiatic-Import headquarters at Tokyo to return, by train, to Wakayama. Just another buying trip. On the train he had met Heston, of the Middleton Chambers crowd. They had talked about a dozen things—men they knew, the price of rice, exchange, the shortage of good silk, and especially of red silk, the coming rainy season. Westgaard himself had said something about having been in almost every village in the district except Fuzetso. He had no real intention of going there; he had merely been talking. When Heston left the train, Westgaard had slept on the long bench . . .

His ticket stub had not been taken from him, but everything else had. The car, when he awoke, had been empty. He had questioned the guard, who knew nothing except that all of the other honorable passengers had already departed.

Whoever had taken his money had known well enough that the white man would buy *bento*—lunch—when he awoke; try to buy it, rather, and find no money. Only, where the money had been, the note in Japanese.

Why he had left the train at the nearest station to Fuzetso, which was not on the railroad, Westgaard did not know. The sensible thing would have been to go on to Wakayama, get more money there by wire and then investigate Fuzetso. If the cash were returned to him there, why bother with the other village? No decent silk had been made in it for years. But—why was it no place for him? Why should he keep away from it?

He had acted entirely upon impulse.

Through village after village he had walked; he was near Fuzetso by evening. Two things kept him from entering. First, he had not the money to buy food or a place to sleep. Second, caution, bred from his long years in the Orient, told him that evening was not the time to go into a village where apparently he was not wanted.

He had slept as best he could on a dry hillock.

Now, without knowing how he knew, he was suddenly aware that he was being watched and that an unblinking bright eye peered at him from behind one of the bushes. As unconcernedly as he could, he pulled on his hat, stood up and strolled off the little elevation. He was being followed, but affected not to know it, although his heart began to quicken.

The mud path, bordered on the left by a ditch full of black water, made quick turns and whoever followed him was able to keep out of sight behind the lines of shrubs. The sky was shell pink and shading already into blue. The ceaseless catstep behind him came closer.

In a far field Japanese men, bare to the thighs, worked in the ooze. Women, with wide straw hats bound under the chin with ribbons, worked beside them, babies strapped to their backs. Bare feet, ankle deep in mud, brought up pools of inky water and, when the owners moved, came out with a hissing sound.

Westgaard tried to focus his eyes on the laborers; but his mind was entirely upon the man who was following him. No use to turn swiftly unless the fellow were close enough to seize . . .

He came at last to a shrine. It was no more than two uprights holding a thatched roof, connected a few feet from the ground by a wooden shelf, on which rested a mirror and a stone on which was roughly carved a fox. Here, grimly, the white man stopped.

The uprights would give him no protection from a gun but, if the other intended knifing him, he might dodge behind them.

The steps came closer.

SUDDENLY Westgaard smiled; around a turn came an old Japanese, hurrying to catch up with the longer strides of the white man.

"I have prayed many times at that shrine," the ancient puffed. "But this is the first time the prayers were ever answered. *Mah!* You walk too rapidly. It is not healthy."

The old Japanese wore a silk kimono gathered high to permit rapid walking. His face was the color of Latakia, seamed and wrinkled, out of which peered eyes extraordinarily prim and wise. For all his great age he was erect.

"The mirror is an honorable *shintai*," the old man said more placidly. "But the stone is said to make plants grow, to cause sons to divorce obnoxious wives, to win a wrestling match, to give geisha wealthy protectors, and to cure colds and avert pestilences. Also other things. A veritable patent medicine of a god. Well, I was waiting for you."

"Why?" Westgaard said slowly.

"That," the other told him, "is something I myself do not know. Perhaps, now that you are here, we will find out."

"Who sent you to meet me?"

"That, also, I do not know. A combination of three things—the desire to see a strange business solved, the desire to welcome a guest properly and possibly, the desire of the gods. Now, let us start for my most unattractive house, lest others come to—greet you."

"You do not speak the North Japanese dialect," Westgaard said, as he followed the other.

"*Hai!* Am I a coolie to talk monkey's talk? I have been— What difference?"

They walked in silence after that.

Where the path branched, the Japanese stopped and pulled off his kimono, handing it to Westgaard.

"If you can get it on, my long legged friend, do so," he said. "You see, I have another beneath it. And when you walk, try not to be so big. Bend over. We take a way to my house which is seldom used."

They were ushered in by a tremulous *jochu*, who peeped at the blue eyed foreigner timidly when her master was not looking. Konomari waved away the ceremonial cup of tea.

"We are cold," he said. "We need more than tea."

Two small cups and a squat bottle were hurriedly brought.

"Examine the whiteness of these cups," the old man said, holding one to the light. "Now as I pour liquid in, observe!"

By some witchcraft of construction, as the cup filled the porcelain seemed to swim with purple fish.

"Lovely! Given me many years ago by— What matter? Many years ago. But do these children of mine understand such beauty? *Mah!* Never in the world." He filled his own cup, waving the maid from the room. "Let us drink to—well, to wealth, happiness and, perhaps, dishonesty. The three seem to go together these days."

Westgaard bowed over his cup.

"Let us merely drink to the first two," he said.

"That is the sort of man I thought you were," Konomari grunted. "The dishonest are wealthy, but are they happy?"

They drank. The lukewarm liquid brought an almost immediate flush to Westgaard's cheeks, and set his fingers and toes to tingling.

"Now we will talk while we eat," Konomari said, as the maid entered with lacquered trays and stands. "Firstly, my friend, why did you come to Fuzetso?"

"To get back my money, and to find what reason any one had for taking it."

"What money?"

Westgaard told him.

"It gets stranger and stranger," the old Japanese muttered.

"What does?"

"Everything."

"And how did you know I was coming?" Westgaard said slowly.

"A word here and there—I heard."

"And now that I am here? What then?"

Before the old man could answer, a knife, accurately hurled, came through the open panel and stuck in the floor between the two men.

There was a long silence, and then Konomari said quietly:

"I can only apologize for such treatment in my house, *danna-san*. But—what does it all mean?"

Westgaard could not tell him.

The Japanese sat quietly as long as he could, and then clapped his hands.

"My household," he told the maid. "Bring them here."

THE ROOM filled swiftly. Four sons, their wives, many grandchildren. At a respectful distance, servants.

"Will some one please wipe the nose of my youngest grandchild?" Konomari said calmly. "There; that is better. Now, all of you see three things. Myself, who am the head of this house; this *danna-san*, who is my guest; and, sticking in the floor, a knife. "I have this to say. Whoever injures the *danna-san*, injures me. Is that clear?" He turned his head slowly, until his eyes were on Kuno, his oldest son. "Do you know whose knife that is?" he asked.

"A common knife, *oraji*. There are a thousand like it," Kuno said.

The father whipped a thin blade from under his kimono.

"There is only one like this," he snapped. "And if I find the pig who threw the other, I intend letting out a little of his blood. When you are in the village, my son, you might pass that word about."

Kuno bowed.

"It will not be pleasant for us when people hear you have the *danna-san* in your house," another son said uneasily.

"Have I spoken to you, Yamabashi?" Konomari asked.

"No, but—"

"Then be silent."

The old man rearranged the folds of his kimono with precision.

"You can all go," he said.

As they stirred, he added:

"Kuno is to stay outside the room of the *danna-san*. Kagawa goes to the little room from which the *danna-san's* can be seen, and does not fall asleep while watching! Morashima, every few minutes, is to walk around the house. That is all."

"And I?" Yamabashi, the youngest asked.

"You? You go back to the nursery, and learn not to speak until you are addressed. Is this a coolie hut?"

When they were alone again, Westgaard said—

"Yamabashi-san might have been questioned."

"No. Firstly, he needed discipline, and secondly, I know as much as he does."

"Which is—"

"Last night the silk workers were told that a white man might come. If he did, everything from disease to a low price for silk would result. So the white man must be kept away. I hardly saw how so much trouble was possible from your visit. That is all Yamabashi knows. Tell me, what have you to do with the price of silk?"

"I buy silk, yes. But the more people who buy, the higher the price."

"I figured so."

"Who buys the silk now?"

"The business stinks with secrecy. It is shipped away from here to Yokohama. A very good price is being paid, I understand. Very good, indeed. Some of the other villages even bring their *habutae* here to sell—"

"Crimson silk?"

Konomari reached for his pipe before replying.

"Yes, crimson. Why?"

"I don't know. Only that the particular shade has been hard to find."

"It is sometimes the wisest thing to go straight where trouble lies," the old man said thoughtfully. "So you came to Fuzetso. If it is agreeable with you, let us go and see if we can purchase any crimson silk."

"Which I'm not wanted to do?"

"Perhaps. I am not sure. We may find out. One thing is certain. That knife was thrown. It did not drop out of the sky. Now, I started in on this affair out of curiosity, but I have been insulted. It does not make me happy. Shall we go?"

As they left the house Westgaard noticed that Kuno, Kagawa and Morashima followed them, and that the youngest son, Yamabashi, joined his brothers before they were at the fence surrounding the garden.

GRANDMOTHERS sat before old hand reels, winding off the skeins with marvelous deftness. Outside the huts, boys were beating sticks together under trees in which wild silkworms were feeding, to keep away hungry birds. The trees were grown, the worms raised, the thread spun, woven and dyed all in the same tiny huts. Westgaard's first glance told him that the silk was *yama-mae*, used for weaving into loose crape, although here and there he saw true *habutae* being woven.

He saw that in most of the huts were objects almost out of keeping in North Japan villages. Costly shrines of gold lace. Inlayed images. Expensive toys for the youngsters.

"Silk brings a good price here," he said to Konomari.

"You saw?"

Westgaard nodded.

"All of this wealth has come in the last month," Konomari stated. "There is too much gambling, but still money is left over. Now—here is a good place. I know the owner. Offer a good price, and see what this fellow Koto says. He knows me." In a lower voice, "Have you seen how those sons of mine follow us? Well, I am not so old that I need their protection, yet—"

Westgaard opened on the silk weaver—

"*Omaye ma funde goran yo?*"

Instead of naming a price as the basis for bargaining, Koto glanced apologetically at Konomari and said that the silk Westgaard indicated was not for sale.

Westgaard then named a price entirely out of reason, and saw that the other blinked, although he shook his head again.

"I will give you silk of a different shade," the weaver said. "But I can not sell any of the blood color. I am sorry."

"Why not?"

"I have agreed—"

"With whom?" Konomari shot in.

"I can not tell."

"You are so completely the fool that I feel sorry for you," the ancient snorted. As he spoke he drew the single edged dagger from his kimono, and began wiping it carefully on his sleeve. "I could make you tell," he continued pleasantly. "Shall I?"

Westgaard watched the play between peasant and high born Japanese.

Panic was obviously creeping up Koto's legs, to loosen the joints of his knees. Konomari brightened the edge of his blade on the silk of the kimono. At last he half turned.

"I am a busy man," he said at large. Koto drew in a deep breath; the unearthly quiet was only broken by that short sound for minutes. "What have you to say, Koto?"

"You may do as you like," the weaver said jerkily. "I can not tell what I do not know."

"You agreed with some person. His name?"

"I do not know." As Konomari held the blade to the light, Koto added hastily, "But Tatsumi pays for the red silk."

"You spoke just in time. We will now see this Tatsumi."

"He is a dangerous man," Koto stammered nervously.

Konomari stared at the weaver as if about to demand, "What do you know of

danger?" Instead, however, he contented himself with—

"I will not mention your name."

Back in the narrow street, the old man said to Westgaard:

"It made it difficult for those sons of mine when we went inside. They came as close to the door as they dared. As to this Tatsumi, I have heard of him. He is a gambler—a true *bakuchi-uchi*, and I have seen him stand before a debtor's shop and howl, 'Will you pay up what you lost last night? If you don't, I'll shout it all over Fuzetso. I'll ruin your trade. I'll make you ashamed. I'll beat you to death. I'll kick a hole in you large enough to walk through.' I have always wondered if he would, and now we can find out."

Westgaard spoke his own thoughts aloud.

"I don't understand this crimson silk business. It hasn't as high a value as white. There's no special demand for it. There has been very little for sale for the last month."

"I do not understand it either," Konomari said. "Or why you should be kept away from this village. Or why the people glare at you as we pass. You have observed that also? Yes? Or why a knife should be hurled into my house. Or why these villagers, always hungry, suddenly have money. A dozen whys."

Down the street careened a temple sweeper, his short jacket open at the chest, his legs carrying him from side to side of the street.

"*Sake*," Konomari grunted.

In one hand the sweeper brandished a broom and as both Westgaard and Konomari stepped back against a wall to give him room, he seemed to leap toward them.

Westgaard tried to get his own long body between the sweeper and the old Japanese, but in the same moment there was a little flurry, and men leaped in from nowhere with incredible swiftness.

"That was not badly done, my sons," Konomari said smoothly. "However, I regret that you have killed him, as we might have made him talk."

The four sons moved back, bowing to their father.

"We came as rapidly as we could," Kuno said. "There was no time to do more than strike."

"He's dead," Westgaard said, bending down.

"Very," Konomari agreed laconically. "There are four knife holes in him. If I had more sons, there would be more holes. Remember, all of you, to purify the blades. There is pig's blood on them. Now, we go to visit Tatsumi, whose name is a combination of dragon and serpent. We will see, among other things, if he is as powerful as the one and as wise as the other."

Tatsumi's gambling was done in the first room the tall white man and old Japanese entered.

On the floor was a doubled mattress which served as a table; over it was pinned a gray sheet. A dice box of brown wicker, shaped like a candle shade, lay on the bare floor. Here, Westgaard knew, the local sporting men gathered—shopkeepers, weavers, artisans, priests. The house receiving a tenth of everything wagered.

IN THE light of day the room was squalid. Konomari wasted no time in it, but pushed past and into the next room. Here sleeping chamber and kitchen were combined. Several men were snoring on the mats; a woman was stirring something which simmered over a little square stove of brown earthenware.

"Where," Konomari demanded, "is Tatsumi?"

The woman looked up, grew uncomfortably red, and began to catch her breath.

"The last time I saw you," Konomari said sharply, "you were working at the dyeing pots. What are you doing here, Mitsu?"

She did not answer, but hung her head, as if beaten down by shame. Westgaard's eyes became cold, steel blue. Was there any connection between this girl, crimson silk, and himself? What did it all mean?

Or was he now blaming everything upon something which he did not understand?

"There was the matter of a little debt, Konomari-san," came from one of the men on the mats. "Mitsu has no sons, and so her husband and I came to an agreement."

"And who in the devil are you?" the ancient snapped.

"Tatsumi, my lord. What can I do for you? Arrange a little party? Or do you want *imbai*, fresh from the country, who do not know what the Yoshiwara is? Whatever I can do—"

All of the sleepers, Westgaard knew, were now awake. Tatsumi had whispered a word to one of them, who passed it along, almost unnoticed, to his next fellow.

Konomari kept his temper.

"You can tell me what is done with the red silk," he said.

Every eye, Westgaard felt, was on him now.

"Red silk, honorable Konomari? Red silk?"

"Your ears are excellent. Red silk. Exactly."

Westgaard said suddenly—

"Konomari-san, do you smell—"

"Smell? I regret that I have a nose in this pig sty! Come, Tatsumi, talk. I am a busy man."

At "pig sty", the woman Mitsu cowered down; Tatsumi saw her. He was on his feet at once and kicked her with his bare foot, slapping her face with his bare palm and pulling her hair. The woman had said, "Correct what displeases you". She made no effort to defend herself.

Westgaard's fists clenched, but he stood quietly. He believed that Tatsumi's rage might be real enough, although he felt that the scene—the gambler's part in it—was staged. The other men in the room should have been watching it. Instead, they were all looking at Westgaard.

One of them, sitting up, cried:

"Tatsumi is a terrible fellow. This is nothing for him at all. He frightens the police, I can tell you. No wonder you merely stand there looking at him with big round eyes like a country boy. Every one is afraid of him. He is terrible."

Westgaard said silkily:

"So I see. It takes courage to beat a woman."

The gambler stopped at once.

"Did you say something about me, *seiyo-jin?*" he snarled.

"You," Konomari answered for the white man, "have good ears. The *danna-san* said that you disgusted him, and I agree. You disgust me, also. However, I am not interested in you and your family affairs. What I want to know is, what is done with the red silk?"

"If you had come alone, Konomari-san, I should have told you. But now that this *keto-jin* is with you, I have nothing to say." With a glance about him to his fellows, as if to say that they should listen closely, he added, "It is really none of your business, anyhow."

"Is it not?" the old man snapped. He raised his voice. "My sons!" he called.

They were in the room before the echo had died down the hall.

"This tiger, this serpent and dragon called Tatsumi, has just said that a little affair is—what are his exact words?—none of my business. What have you to say about that, my sons?"

Kuno, the oldest, growled—

"We will make it your business, *oyaji*."

"Good. Tatsumi, according to all accounts, including your own, you are a terrific fellow. Now here are my four sons, myself, and my white friend—six. I see you have five followers. Making six again. Very interesting. Now I ask you once more, what of the red silk?"

Tatsumi's eyes roved about the room. All of his men were either kneeling or on their feet; he bent toward the nearest of them.

"Make your plans," Konomari said. "They will help you little."

Westgaard, intent upon Tatsumi, saw the gambler take something from the man to whom he was whispering. For an instant he stared, and then, with no visible tightening of muscles, sprang forward, clearing the heap of quilts at a jump.

A knife stung him in the arm as he grabbed Tatsumi; the gambler and nearest man were both dragged down by the unexpected attack.

Instantly the room was in a turmoil. Konomari and his sons were in action, but the white man had no time to see what they were doing. Close to his own face were eyes like crescents of evil light. He felt his hair rise as some one fell over him with a soft gurgling cry. Ragged, broken words, a thick stream of abuse and filth, were snarled into his ears, but all of the time he worked to get hold of Tatsumi's hands.

The white man felt a hand creeping up his neck, and knew the numbness the crushing fingers could bring. He gave over his search for both of Tatsumi's hands, and hit out blindly. One of Tatsumi's followers, taken high in the shoulder by the swinging blow, spun about, stumbled into the earthenware stove, and fell.

The charcoal, spilled to the floor, began to send up smoke; in another moment one of the quilts was burning brightly.

"Stamp out the fire, my sons," watchful Konomari cried. He had made his one mistake. All four jumped to do his bidding.

The old man was overborne as the gamblers, Tatsumi at their head, rushed past him. The last of them whirled his knife, but Westgaard's flying tackle brought him to earth, the blade clattering to the floor. The white man came to his feet at once, but the gambler lay still.

"We have one of them," Konomari said grimly, after telling his sons not to run after the others. "And from him we may learn a thing or two."

"I've learned something already," Westgaard said. "It may—"

Kuno and Yamabashi were smothering the flames with heavy quilts as Konomari said softly:

"Wait until we are in my house, *danna-san*. Tell me then what it is. The roof, a proverb says, bends down to listen. I thought you saw, or knew something when you leaped at Tatsumi—and I spoiled it by calling attention to the fire. *Mah!* I am getting old! And I was fearful that you would begin to fight when Tatsumi was beating his wife."

"I wanted to," said the white man.

A STEADY stream of excited men and women were hurrying down the narrow street when Konomari and Westgaard were again in it. Every house vomited excited Japanese. Merchants howled invitations to attend their bargains, the keepers of eating shops fiddled with the fire beneath the cooking pots that the *sobaya* might heat more quickly, but none of the people stopped.

"We had better see what is up," Konomari said. "There is a something in the air. Keep our prisoner close, my sons; tighten that rag over his mouth—fine!"

None jostled or pushed. It reminded Westgaard of a long train of ants, moving relentlessly on. Near the shop of oil dishes, the throng separated into two parts. Exactly, the white man thought, like ants reaching a rock.

What they saw at last was this: a great bamboo cage, ten feet high and as wide, and in it a Japanese. He was squatted down, blank of eye; boys, bravely shouting to one another, would dash up and place a finger on the cage, to boast of it afterward.

"*Kodomo no shigoto,*" the villagers agreed. "It is the work of the untended dead."

Westgaard knew that the insane, in North Japan, were so caged.

Turning away in disgust, Konomari said:

"After these fools have had their fun with the poor devil, I will try and get him into a bed. There is nothing to be done now."

"He seems quiet enough," Westgaard agreed. "I wonder what he was doing when he was caught?"

Konomari asked the question at large.

The story came piecemeal—

"He always slept—"

"Once he was a good worker—"

"We saw him go to sleep after having slept all night—"

"And being virtuous men, we could not refuse him shelter, but—"

"We seized him firmly, knowing that some devil was in him—"

"He told strange stories of things he saw—"

"*Hai!* Of gods and demons and women—"

"And so we—"

"A dozen of us—"

Westgaard said to Konomari:

"His eyes are open; he's awake now. If he's a silk worker, go ask him about red silk."

"He is nothing but a *geta* mender," Konomari answered. "This has nothing to do with our problem, my friend— You think it has? Well, ask him yourself, then."

Westgaard went close to the cage.

He faced the cage squarely, trying to catch the prisoner's eye. The stream of onlookers flowed slowly past, rippling into two runlets as they approached the cage, passing it on either side with clicking tongues and bated breath.

"*Tari naoso to omou ga,*" Westgaard said steadily. "I want to help you. What puts you to sleep all the time, old man? Tell me. Then we will get you out of the cage."

The blank eyes slowly lighted.

"Tell," Westgaard insisted.

"I—can not," the *geta* mender gasped. "None will—believe. I am—already crazed."

"You are not crazed," Westgaard snapped. "A doctor-san will make you well. Tell me, and you can go home."

"I promise it," Konomari shrilled, himself excited now.

"Ask again," the caged Japanese pleaded. "I do not remember—what you wish to know."

Westgaard put the question slowly.

The throng of Japanese pressed closer, eyes wide, mouths open. Westgaard could feel them at his back.

"Yes, I understand now. I can tell you. You will not let me die in the cage? You promise? All I did is—"

He clutched at his throat, the last word gurgling out as the point of the hurled blade buried itself deeply. He stood stock still for a moment. Then a tremor went through him. He fell, while a great smear of blood brightened his kimono, turning it, Westgaard thought, to shining crimson silk.

Just as he died he lifted his head.

"Dreams!" he cried distinctly. "Dreams!"

The throng surged nearer. Westgaard started to turn where Konomari had been, but saw that the old Japanese had been pushed by the excited villagers a dozen feet away; saw also that where Kuno's taller than average figure was above the crowd there seemed to be a jostling, and then something tremendous hit him. The cage, the crowd, the bright sky, the uplifted roofs of a temple all whirled in his sight and went black.

In the immeasurable time between reason and unconsciousness, he knew that feet seemed to be stamping on him, that something had been jammed roughly into his mouth, that he was being carried swiftly away from the cage. He heard, high above the noise of the villagers about the cage, Konomari's "Hold tight to the gambler, Kuno!" And a shriller voice, probably that of Yamabashi—

"Where is the white man?"

Then there was a roaring in his ears like sea on sand—and silence.

WESTGAARD stared at the plane of blackness over him. He lay perfectly still for a moment, and then slowly stood up. His head ached, his legs were unsteady under him. It seemed that he rose too short a distance to have come from a quilt on the floor, and, reaching down, he found that he had been lying on a crude cloth cot.

He lighted a match and saw that he was in a room apparently of concrete. There was one door, one window— The match flared out.

The hush of night deepened about him. The crowing of a cock would have been a pleasant sound.

It was still dim but no longer absolutely black. Westgaard heard, or thought he heard, little noises. A rat gnawing at a board, perhaps.

Westgaard, alert at last, went into action. He tried the bars across the one window, first gently, and then with all his strength; they did not give, nor was there any creak of metal.

The floor of the room, like the walls and ceilings, was of concrete. He went to the door. Even with his shoulder against it, there was no give, although the wood made a cracking sound. He ran his hand along the edge of the door and found that the hinges were inside, but that the heads of the bolts had been wisely beaten out of shape.

The white man lighted a match and, this time, held a cigaret to the flame. It pleased him that his fingers were steady. Before the match went out he made an exact inventory of the room. A cot with a coarse blanket or two. Nothing else. Just a door, walls, a window, a ceiling across which were supporting beams.

From the window came light again. The gleam of a torch, of many torches, giving off starlike sparklets of ocher and crimson. Muffled, but growing steadily clearer, the sound of advancing feet; muffled snatches of song, foreign, fanatical, and terribly earnest.

Westgaard shivered.

The ceiling of the room brightened with faint color, ghostly shades of violet dusted with yellow, maroon with gamboge —a devil's palette of color.

Under the torches, Westgaard knew, must be dark faces and shadowy forms. Why? What quarrel had the Japanese with him? For years he had worked among them as a friend. Kept missionaries from buying sword guards and blades and images too cheaply. Bought for the A-1 at a fair price to the natives. What had any one against him?

Red silk!

That, he realized, was the answer.

What some one wanted to prevent his learning about, he had stumbled over— a thing he would never have done if his money had not been stolen, if he had not been warned away from Fuzetso.

He had no time to consider anything now.

The light was constantly advancing. From side to side it flitted. Now it seemed half quenched in the night air— had he been unconscious all of the day? It broke out again, closer, in new coruscations. It hovered, and the gleam of it lighted up, like a demon lantern of great size, strange paths, dim, evil passages.

With careful haste, as if his mind had actually been planning without his own knowledge, Westgaard went about a curious business.

He fastened the four corners of the blanket from the cot by tying it to the side pieces of wood. Next he stuffed the second blanket, bundled together in a heap, under the other. He raised the cot and shook it violently, making certain that the doubled blanket did not fall out, or the other slip. To make sure, he tied the outer one several times along the long edge of the cot, jerking the knots tightly, and then shoving them out of sight.

Next he pushed the cot with its end against the wall and, standing at the far end, raised it quickly so that it leaned at a forty-five degree angle. He gave the bed covering a final pat, found that the cot stood steadily, then backed off to an opposite corner.

He lighted a third match and measured with his eye the distance from where he stood to the cot. He saw that the middle of the cot was under one of the beams— that nearest to the door. He drew a short breath.

With no preliminary, Westgaard ran forward. He took off at the seventh step, leaped into the middle of the cot and, with the impetus of the stretched cloth, sprang high.

His head hit the ceiling. His arms, which had missed the hold he had planned, flailed out, caught at the beam— He swung his leg over it instantly.

Without a pause, without thinking of the increasing pain in his head, he reached down and seized the high end of the cot.

He lifted it away from the wall, swung it out into the room and let it drop. Cupping his hands, he lighted his last match. The cot was almost where it had stood before, the bed covering hardly ruffled. Shadows by the light—the flaring torchlight—in the dark room would make the bed seem occupied.

For the fraction of a minute, at least, he would be able to see who entered the room.

He might do two things. Wait until he was discovered, and then be ignominiously pulled down like a monkey out of a tree, or select one of the assaulters and drop on him. Which one? Tatsumi, probably. Or was Tatsumi only a catspaw? Somebody, Westgaard believed, owned the cot. No Japanese would sleep so high above the floor. Whose cot was it, and would the owner come?

In him, Westgaard decided, was the answer to everything he did not know. Very quietly he put together that which he had learned. First, in the gamblers' den, he had smelled what he believed to be opium. Second, he thought he had seen one of the gamblers hand Tatsumi a foil wrapped or tin package. Possibly opium again. Third, the villagers were being paid an outrageous price for their product. Why? Not clear. Fourth, no crimson silk was to be had. Why again? Fifth, the caged coolie had been killed when he said too much. And, last, since the coolie had been killed, whoever was mixed up in the business would not stop at Westgaard.

He wondered why they had not killed him at once; wondered where Konomari was, and what had actually happened when he himself had been slugged and dragged away to this room.

What did they—whoever it was—want of him? He knew that it was nothing good. And what the end—his end—would be, since he knew too much?

Now he could hear low excited voices outside the room. He crouched on the beam, waiting. The Japanese were only good at maiming. Not until knives came into play would he be downed.

With sudden hope he ran his hand along the roof. Boards.

He had been too hasty. He should have torn loose one of the bed legs. With a lever he might have been able to pry open a space sufficient to squeeze through.

He whispered to himself—

"Only one way out now."

The door swung open.

Westgaard tensed, waited; no one came into the room.

"He still sleeps."

"That was a powerful blow."

Westgaard worked farther into the shadow.

OUTSIDE the room he could see many men. A small space, near the door, was unfilled, and in this stood a lacquered and gilded shrine. The gilt on the black lacquer was like another candle flame in the gloom. On the shrine was an image, a short, squat figure in wood, with outstretched arms, swelling muscles and clenched fists; the features were contracted in hatred, the eyes threatening horror. Before it several candles burned, the flickering light making image and humans about it more awful.

A crimson silk band was fluttering from the image's head.

Brown faces were rapt, ecstatic.

Westgaard listened intently.

A priest was before the image, but he merely bowed again and again; some one else, whom Westgaard could not see, was talking.

"He will sign," Westgaard heard the unseen speaker say. "When he has, all of the god's silk will go to our countrymen across the sea, lest they forget their own home and gods. They will soon return to us, and bring much wealth with them. And you will continue to get much money for the red silk. As to the white man, does not his own book of the gods say that when blood is shed it is proper to bleed the killer? Who but he could have killed Mota, after our companion became crazed? It is even possible that the *seiyojin* put a spell on Mota.

"When the white foreigner is gone, we will have no more worries. The word of the god will go on."

There were, Westgaard decided coldly, about twenty men that he could see. How many more there were he could not tell.

"When will the white man be killed?" some one called. "I have heard that their blood is black, like a pig's."

"Who can tell?" The unseen orator laughed. "It will depend upon himself—and other things. If he behaves as he should—" Westgaard understood now why he was being allowed to hear thed iscussion— "he may live for a long time."

Even with this, Westgaard was unable to guess what it all meant, save that he was to be forced, willy-nilly, to do something concerning the crimson silk. If he refused, he died. If he did what was asked, whatever "signing" they wanted, and conditions changed, he died. When they were done with him, he died.

Dying could only happen once; torture could come many times.

"Better get it over with," he thought. "No sense dragging things out."

As if some unseen signal had been passed, the priest jerked erect, said something Westgaard did not hear, and pointed to the door. The villagers swept into the room in a dark, indistinguishable mass.

Before the first of them were at the dummy on the cot, a cold voice whipped them about.

"Gods of heaven and earth! What have we here?"

Konomari's four sons, eyes on their father, filled the doorway behind the ancient.

They were repeating to themselves his final instructions.

"Kuno, remember what I have taught you. Kagawa, show these piglets how a sword should be handled, but be careful of the blade. Morashima, put sufficient force into your blows and do not forget to swing at the stabbing arm. Yamabashi, make wide circles, for your arms are not as long as your brothers', and remember to hold the hilt steady when you come to bone. And none of you trouble about me. I have forgotten more sword tricks than I have been able to teach you."

"Well," Konomari said again, "what devil's business are you about?"

Before any answered, he said in the same chill voice:

"Do not trouble to tell me for I already know. And I know this, also. You are in a room from which there is only one escape. There are many of you and, blocking the way, are only an old man and his children."

Kagawa, second of the sons, punctuated the sentence by growling in his throat and swinging his sword in a vicious circle.

The cot, the white man, seemed forgotten. To many of the villagers Konomari was both a revered and dread figure. These pressed away from him. Slowly, however, others filtered forward, knives in hand. One heavily built fellow, Westgaard marked, had an ax behind him, heavy enough to smash through the long *samurai* blades.

The man who had spoken before raised his voice:

"This is not your affair, Konomari-san," he said. "Go home. Leave this to us. Nothing save trouble will come of it."

"I believe that," Konomari retorted. "Trouble—to you."

"You will not be reasonable?"

"No, mad dog, I will not. Or rather, I will. I am reasonable. Drop your weapons and I will give you all your lives."

By now Westgaard was able to distinguish Tatsumi, but the gambler was not the orator. The other was a man taller than the rest, and as Westgaard peered down, he heard him say—

"I give you one chance, Konomari-san, or—"

"We have had enough talk," Kuno grumbled. "The night is cold, my father; let us have a little exercise."

"All in good time," the old Japanese agreed. "First, I wish to say this to you all. You know me, I think. I have some little reputation in this village. I want the white man. In addition, I believe I also want this fellow who has led you,

and who has the blood and the vices of two races in his blood. I am not fond of riddles, and I am going to solve this one. Do I get the white man?"

They swayed back and forth, muttering. Westgaard saw that one of the leader's cohorts slipped through the crowd to the cot and drove his knife several times into the bedding. When he returned to the leader's side he whispered and held up the knife.

"The white man is dead, Konomari," the halfcaste cried. "His blood is on the blade! Do you want this same?"

Candlelight glanced on the long knife.

"I do not think I should mind," Konomari said. "I am not to be fooled by monkey tricks. Where is the testimony on the blade? I see none."

Nor did any one else.

The blade shone brightly. Nothing dimmed it.

In the instant that the halfcaste gaped. He saw only bright blade. In the instant that his companion cried, "I stabbed him a dozen times!" Konomari shrilled:

"At them, my sons. Drive them out!"

THE LITTLE room trembled with sound. Many of the villagers sought the walls, pressing away; others, fearful of either their leader or Konomari, joined in the fight.

Westgaard looked down at the swaying mass of bodies. It seemed like a swarm of monstrous locusts, hostile and venomous; they screamed with one voice, surged this way and that as Konomari and his sons advanced with wide swinging blades.

"Out with them!" Konomari cried, his old voice cracking, "By the horns of Jizo, there will be a wailing and a counting of beads this night! You want a killing, halfcaste? Good. You shall have all the death you desire!"

The uncertain villagers hampered those who remained beside the halfcaste. All backed away, but suddenly Westgaard saw that the counter attack was almost ready. A dozen or more men—Tatsumi and his gamblers among them—were ready, knives out; the halfcaste himself had secured the great ax, which he kept behind him.

"I give you one more chance," the Eurasian screamed.

Konomari laughed.

Westgaard balanced carefully on his beam.

"*Koi!*"

The ax flashed up, Konomari's slender blade parrying it, but offering little defense. The old man gave no back step; instead, he tried to get closer to his opponent.

Westgaard hurled himself down from the rafter.

His arms went around the Eurasian's neck; both went to the floor heavily, Westgaard above. The ax clattered to the floor.

A howl went up from the Japanese.

"He died, and is alive again!"

This time Konomari allowed many to run from the room, but only after he had observed that they were not any who had been actually fighting.

Westgaard scrambled to his feet, the halfcaste up also. Yamabashi calmly pushed the ax out of reach and stood with one foot over it. Tatsumi and his companions, the panic stricken priest also, were ringed about by long blades.

Westgaard advanced and the halfcaste backed away from him. After the first turn the Eurasian cowered against the wall; he seemed almost witless, for he chattered to himself. Pursuer and pursued brushed against Konomari and his sons at every turn, and the halfcaste moaned a little at the touch.

Twice Westgaard tried to leap forward; the other was never there to meet him. The white man's breath began to whistle through his nose.

The room was strange with candlelight, shadowy, almost a phantom pantomime. Westgaard worked to corner the retreating Eurasian, almost succeeded, and heard the other's gusty sigh as he slipped away.

In the halfcaste, Westgaard knew, was the answer to the whole affair. He

wanted to discover it himself. It was really his business.

The circle of the room began again, quicker; the Eurasian was almost running in his haste. Westgaard followed him swiftly, while his own head throbbed with pain. He stopped suddenly and sidestepped the other into the nearest corner.

The Eurasian bent his head and began to whimper. Instead of relaxing, Westgaard was ready for the blue gleam in the air, jumped a little to one side, and drove his fist as the descending knife missed.

"Well done," Konomari shouted. "I have always wanted to see how white men fought. *Mah!* Your blow has put him to sleep. This silly Yamabashi of mine offers you his own knife to finish the man of two races off with, but you and I have more sense! We want to discover a thing or two, and we know how to do it."

Westgaard looked down at the Eurasian, who was making no effort to get to his feet; looked over to where Konomari's sons formed a circle of steel about Tatsumi and the other Japanese; wondered what part the frightened priest had in the affair.

All that he said was—

"You have been good to me, Konomari-san."

"And you? If you had not jumped out of the heavens—I was wondering where you were, since I knew you could not escape—that ax would have split my head and left me in two pieces. They would have been forced to tie me together to get me into the coffin! Now, my sons, add this part cow, part devil to your collection, and take them all home."

WESTGAARD, in Konomari's room, sat attentively while the ancient spoke.

"We must forget the moonlight," the old Japanese said, knocking out his pipe against a brazier. "It was only made to trouble the mind. We must also forget the little white blossoms—how they glimmer like baby stars waiting to be born! That may be a new thought; it would make a delicate poem, eh?

"We are comfortable; here are the stands with dainty food, here are cups of wine, so purple and cool that they are coated with dewy vapors and yet will warm the veins with fire; our lanterns are glowing. I hear some one singing, like a melody in the drowsy spaces of the night . . ."

He huddled lower into the warm quilt. Only his eyes seemed awake.

"I wonder how comfortable the half-caste—his name, I find, is Honochi—is feeling. And his companions."

The ancient began to rock back and forward.

He said at last—

"We will find out," and he raised his voice in command.

His sons marshaled eleven men into the room, all with their hands tied together.

Konomari wasted no time.

"Well," he said, "I see that you are all alive and in good health, save for a cut here and there, which was no more than could be expected. Please listen to my white friend; he knows a little—although less than you thought, since he cared nothing about any of you or your business—and he will tell you."

Westgaard said quietly:

"I'd never heard of any of you, or of whatever you have been up to. If you'd let me alone, nothing would have ever happened. But, when Konomari-san and I were in your room, Tatsumi, I smelled stale opium smoke. I saw one of the men there give Tatsumi a foil package—opium again. I rather believe that the concrete room was made as a storehouse—safe and dry and impenetrable—for the drug. You killed the crazy man because he was an addict, and was going to tell what he knew."

"Exactly," Konomari said.

His face was more bland than ever. Even his eyes were peaceful now, and his folded old hands appeared as delicate as a crinkled cup.

"Who killed Mota after he was placed in the cage?" he asked.

"The white man," Honochi answered. "We saw him do it."

"Did you? Did you indeed? Well, we will forget about that for the moment. I ask you all—what of this blood colored silk? What? You do not answer? Come, tell me." His eyes went to one of the gamblers, who was working his hands together. "*You* tell," he said. "Then you can go."

"*Watakushi no yona bimbonin*—"

"Whether you are poor or not does not interest me. There is no money in this. Answer! Or, by every toenail of the sacred crow, I will pull out your own by the roots."

"I—" a pleading glance at Honochi and Tatsumi, a sigh—"I do not know. I am only a poor man."

"You still have your life," Konomari said gently. "That is something."

The gambler shivered and sucked in his breath.

"I have sent the priest back to his temple," Konomari said. "He is nothing but a fool, and you treated him as such. *Hai!* You worked on him with your talk about honor and religion and money for the temple and the welfare of his flock, and he believed you. He was so completely the fool that I felt sorry for him. He blessed the red silk, he told me. Now, why did he do that? No? You can not answer such a simple question? My sons, escort all of these hogs save—what is your name, gambler?—to wherever you keep them. He and I will have a word or two together. Yamabashi, you may return to me also, after you have seen that this litter is back in the sty."

Westgaard, Konomari and Kogo were alone.

"Will you talk?" Konomari snapped.

"They will kill me—"

"So will I."

"I— No."

Konomari pricked him with his thin dagger.

Kogo's head went up.

"Kill me," he said. "I will not talk. Even if I did, I could not tell you everything. You would have made your bargain for nothing."

The ancient scratched his chin.

"There is a little honor in you," he admitted slowly. "It gains you your life. Take him back."

As Yamabashi stepped forward, Westgaard said:

"No. Listen, Konomari-san . . ."

When the white man had finished, Konomari's face was a picture. At last he began to grin, and then to laugh openly.

"It is worth trying," he said when he could talk. "I wonder if it will work. I— I think that with Yamabashi's help we can do it. It is distinctly an improvement on my own plan. If a follower—like Kogo—will not speak when threatened, what will happen when we have a leader? Probably nothing. Still, one never knows. Your plan, with no blood, is better than mine with blood.

"Yamabashi, you have always, as I have often told you, talked too much. I am going to give you the opportunity to make plenty of noise now. First, tie this fellow and get him out of the way." When it was done, Konomari continued. "You heard this Kogo talk. When you were very young, Yamabashi, I punished you for mocking your honorable nurse. Have you forgotten how?"

"To imitate the voice of the honorable nurse?"

"Now," Konomari wailed, "I am the father of a fool! No—"

Yamabashi began to grin.

"That is better," his father said, smiling also. "Open the door and slide back a panel or two. What you are to say will be nothing but a word or so—never more than that. But if you make enough noise, Yamabashi— Come, let us begin!"

Westgaard nodded, and Konomari's voice raised terrifyingly—

"Why have you been getting red silk, Kogo?"

A finger to lips warned Yamabashi against replying.

"Talk!" Konomari screamed.

Yamabashi drew in a great breath, then moaned. Up went his voice, higher and higher, until Westgaard roared—

"Will you talk now?" Then, with a pathetic crack, Yamabashi's wail stopped, only to slide moaningly down the scale.

White man and Japanese grinned.

"I thought I heard some one cry out," Westgaard whispered.

"Or the wind in the trees," Konomari said. "Now, we do it again."

A second time the performance was gone through. At the end of it, when Yamabashi's dreadful howl was still, Konomari cried clearly:

"Dead! Say the prayers for the dead, or his soul will follow and torment us."

Silence. Then—

"Drag him away, and wipe up the blood."

WESTGAARD, grinning broadly, went to the *kakemono* corner and brought back a flower bowl; he poured water on the matting, scrubbing it around as if a stain had been removed.

"Let us go and see how the others have taken it," Konomari suggested.

"If there's a chance, try Tatsumi or the halfcaste next," Westgaard said. "If we do this too many times, it will lose its sting."

"I wonder what they are thinking," Konomari muttered, half to himself. "We did it well. All their sins are weighing heavily, at this moment. Let us walk slowly, and give them time for a prayer or two."

It was no longer dark. There was a high moon and a great concourse of stars. Green grass, aquamarine in the moonlight, marked the way of a narrow stream.

"Very lovely," Konomari said slowly.

The white man nodded.

"Why do men do terrible things?" the ancient asked, expecting no answer. "Opium—money—*hai!* When I was a boy, I remember how the men went into the orchards. One climbed a tree, the other stood at the bottom, ax in hand, threatening to cut the tree down if it did not promise to bear a good crop. If only that could be done with men—but it can not."

Instead of going through the house, Konomari had made the circuit of it and entered a room not far from the one in which the "torture" had been enacted. Kuno, standing outside, pushed aside a panel.

Honochi and Tatsumi, both bound, sat side by side. The halfcaste's lips seemed to lift from his teeth, writhe, then drop into position again. The gambler did not move a muscle.

"What—what have you done?" the Eurasian whispered.

"I?" Konomari glanced about. "Nothing." He paused, then added silkily. "Why?"

"You learned nothing," the halfcaste snarled.

"Nothing," Konomari agreed. "Otherwise—" he stopped.

His meaning was clear. Otherwise, none would have heard what Konomari and Westgaard knew they had been able to hear—the comedy in the room.

"You can't do that to me," Honochi cried. "I'm not a coolie. I'm not a Japanese subject. I'll report this to my consul."

"How are you going to get to him?" Westgaard asked.

How well the play acting had worked was apparent when Kuno, oldest of the sons, said—

"We also recited the words for the dead, *oyaji*, that his spirit not trouble us."

Konomari said primly—

"Good."

"Which one shall we take next?" Westgaard asked.

The ancient looked around. His eye lighted on a trembling Japanese in a corner.

"Ah, there is Kamamatsu; he knows me. Coolie, you will be next. Where you will go, if you do not tell all you know, will be goblins who will feast on your soul. They will say, 'Kamamatsu, son of nothing and father of less, it would have been better if you had answered Konomari's little question! Then you would still be

alive.' Come with us, Kamamatsu, and tell what you know."

"He will tell you nothing," Tatsumi shouted.

"So much the worse for him," the old man said complacently.

"My consul—"

Westgaard turned to the halfcaste.

"I don't think you dare say very much to him," the white man announced.

"Kamamatsu—" Kanomari's sleek voice—"if I promise that none of these others dare hurt you, will you tell me the truth?"

"We—we have agreed," the coolie said slowly. "None shall talk. I—I have already said my dying prayers, Konomari-san."

The ancient gave himself up to contemplation of the bare walls. He said at last:

"I wonder if it is true that a white moth is always seen flying when a man dies? They say the soul is carried upward in that manner. Next time I will watch for it. *Hai-ya!* I am getting bored."

"Are you human?" the halfcaste choked out.

Konomari did not answer him.

A tiny wind stirred the mulberry trees.

"Kamamatsu?"

"I can not tell."

"It is growing late. Shall we try Kamamatsu, or some one else?"

"Why not let luck decide?" Westgaard said.

"Exactly! The gods will determine upon whom we will next perform. Pull two straws from the matting, Kagawa, my son. Make one shorter than the other. Whoever gets the shorter straw comes with us. I hope he is willing to talk. Whoever talks, naturally, is given his life for a reward."

The halfcaste said slowly—"Suppose he—whoever it is—lies to get away?"

"We will not let him go until the truth is proven," Westgaard said.

Konomari held out his hand with the straws.

"Honochi," he said. "Tatsumi. You both know plenty. Choose!"

THE HALFCASTE'S eyes fastened upon the straws. His lips twisted; he seemed trying to remember whether there had been any difference in their appearance before Konomari concealed their length. He sighed, then said faintly—

"Let—Tatsumi pick."

Konomari looked at him in disgust.

Tatsumi, gambler still, realized that whichever straw the gods intended for him he would get. Eyes shut, he reached for one of them.

The halfcaste's face grew whiter and whiter. Every trace of color was gone from it. In the moonlight it looked strangely old. He reached out his hand and seized both those of Konomari and Tatsumi.

The bonds of both men had been cut. They stood side by side, halfcaste leader and gambler lieutenant.

"Wait," the Eurasian whispered. "Wait."

Every eye was upon him.

Westgaard thought he knew what was passing through the halfcaste's mind—that sooner or later one of the Japanese would crack under the strain. Possibly Tatsumi, since the gambler, knowing what had already happened to one of his men, would take the easiest way out. Westgaard relaxed, listening.

"If I tell, you will not—" the Eurasian began. He never finished the sentence.

What happened next was too swift for the eye to follow.

In some way Honochi, evil face alight, had drawn Konomari's knife; at the same instant Tatsumi whipped a tiny, keen blade from under his short kimono. Westgaard, lunging forward, hurled both men to the floor.

"You fool, you fool," the halfcaste babbled, blood foaming from his mouth. "Oh, Tatsumi, what have you done? I knew they were playing a part, and so was I. We could have both gone free, and now—"

Tatsumi made a noise in his throat but did not answer. In falling, Honochi's own

knife had deflected and had taken the gambler between the ribs.

Westgaard, aghast, said nothing, but Konomari, lips a thin line, was on his knees beside the gambler.

"You threw your dice and they lost," he said. "You have but a minute on earth. Make the most of it!"

The gambler tried to laugh. He was dead before the grimace was complete.

Honochi's hand was at his bloody throat.

"And you will get no more from me," he said jerkily. "You, Konomari, are an ape, and the son of an ape. A wizened, shriveled monkey. So were your fathers before you—apes in the trees—tree apes in the temple gardens—I am not afraid of you . . ."

"No," Konomari said gravely. "He need not be afraid of any one—now. Two dead, and nothing learned. I am sick of the business."

Westgaard said wearily—

"They'll all talk now that their leaders are dead."

"I hardly care," the ancient muttered. "Our plan did not work out very well, did it? I had thought that the man of two bloods was weakening; instead, he was fooling me. If he had struck me down with my own knife, the rest would have rushed us. Well, he failed, and so did we. As to the crimson silk—"

A Japanese said simply:

"They are both dead, Konomari-san. We know. Shall we tell you?"

Westgaard spoke for the old man.

"Talk," he said.

"Opium."

"We knew that. The silk?"

"Inside the wood, about which the crimson silk was wrapped, were small boxes of opium. Only a *tael* in each, lest the weight be questioned. In your land across the sea, Honochi's friends bought only red silk."

"And I was to sign shipping orders? Some of it would be consigned to the A-I on my order, and then sold to Honochi's confederates?"

"It is true."

"How long have you done this?"

"First we sent it in idols, but that was discovered. Then in the tanks of the great steamers. That was discovered. Other ways, also. But this—"

"Was almost perfect," Konomari said. "The silk went to reputable houses, and then other men in your confidence bought only the crimson silk."

"We have more orders than we can fill," the Japanese said.

"There are always plenty of men who are evil," Konomari muttered, turning away. "Two dead—three, counting Mota, who was killed for telling what we already knew. Come, my white friend, it is time for us to rest."

"IF THEY hadn't tried to keep me away, nothing would have happened," Westgaard said. "They thought I knew too much—or that I was going to try at any cost to buy crimson silk, which would have meant difficulty in America, since the men in the scheme would never be certain which silk contained the drug. From the concrete storehouse they'd built, they must have been going into the smuggling extensively."

"That is over now," Konomari said. He added thoughtfully, "You saved my life twice, my friend."

"And you mine. How did you know where I was?"

"How? Simple. I told Yamabashi to keep Tatsumi in sight and he did. When he found how men were gathering, he hurried to me, and we came." He sighed. "It was not a very good fight. But we have stopped much evil, you and I. We did more good than that. The priest who listened to Honochi's oily tongue has always been bothering me about this and that. He will say little now, eh?"

"He was fooled, just as the villagers were by the higher price for the red silk they wove. Now, Konomari-san, I must get back to my work."

"Wait, wait. We will have warmed wine brought us and the quilts spread. I am going to tell you of the time when I

was young, and when fighting was fighting. To begin at the beginning, I had a teacher for instruction in two edged blades. He was the strongest man in the whole city—yes, spread the quilts and I will lie down—the strongest, and the most skilful in Yeddo. It was sixty years ago, in the year of the tiger—I started on a journey. What a brocaded silk kimono I wore! Servants and retainers were behind me— I believe I will close my eyes for a moment—yes, it was in the year of—the rat—or the tiger. It was long ago . . ."

When Konomari's sons tiptoed into the room, the old man was asleep. Westgaard stared into the dark garden. Kuno, oldest of the sons, slipped noiselessly across the matting, smiled down at his warlike sire, and then said softly to the white man:

"You have made him very happy, *danna-san*, by removing the evil which lurked in our village. And made us happy also, by keeping our father safe."

Westgaard, thinking of dead men, said—

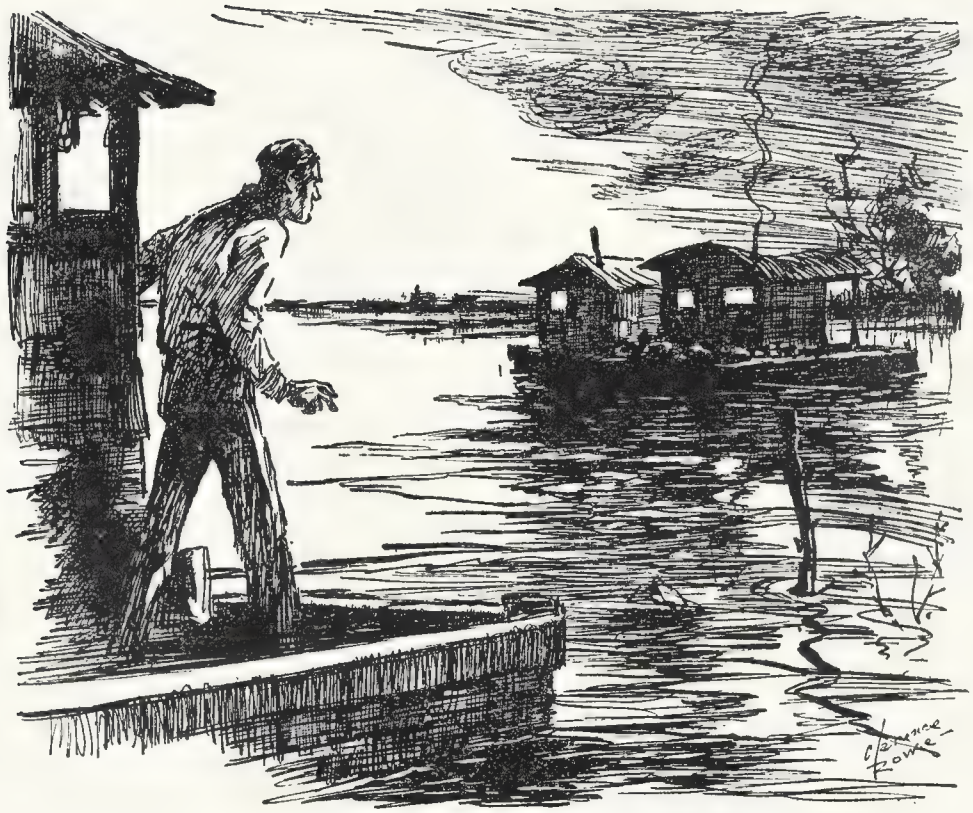
"If I had stayed away—"

"Two serpents would still be breathing their venom here. We are very glad that you came."

Westgaard said nothing, but when the four sons left the room he stretched his tired body on the quilts.

The next time Kuno, voluntary but unnecessary guard, peeped in, both men were sleeping. The gaunt white man's face was no longer somber. Once his mouth moved, as if he smiled. In some way, although in deep sleep, Konomari had placed his hand on Westgaard's extended arm, where, token of friendship, it lay firmly.

Kuno, smiling at the two men, saw that the moonlight touched the two heaps of quilts, and gave the silk its true color of crimson.



A Story of Shantyboat Pirates on the Mississippi

SOFTPAW *by* RAYMOND S. SPEARS

A RUMOR that a tripper had been badly treated in Apple Reach came to Mendova and was talked over in the gunstore. According to the river gossip, a shantyboat had floated down the Ohio, circled into the Mississippi, landing at lonesome sandbars, caving bends and in all kinds of back eddies. Through binoculars, or telescopes, glimpses had been caught of the passerby, but beyond the fact that he was little more than a youth, nothing was known of him. The bets were even that he was a fugitive from justice.

He floated into Apple Reach, a succession of sandbars, willow islands, wooded banks and pirate retreats. Softpaws on the river who were hunting, fishing, trapping or hiding out, not infrequently mistook Apple Reach for a sporting resort. Here and there glimpses could be had of shackboats, but for the most part, the transient saw few signs of occupation. Squirrels barking in the hickories and

pecans, ducks in the eddies and wild geese on the bars, were tempting. Raccoons, opossums, mink and other fur animals left their tracks along the water's edge and any one looking for sporting opportunities stopped.

The skulker worked out of the main river, crossed the wide shallow eddies and hid away in Sand Dune Bay. Apparently no one was within five miles of him. He had a nice boat and plenty of outfit. He killed some game and caught some catfish, perch and, in the bayous, large mouth black bass. Then the grapevine telegraph went to work, telling the river pirates' side of the story.

According to the rumor, the Turtlebacks had come down in a fleet of motorboats, shantyboats and ragshacks, everything loaded deep with junk, loot of commissaries and humans. They rounded into Sand Dune Bay and, of course, found the tripper softpaw. They invited him over to the *Belle of the Bends* to a dance, and as they had a fiddler and an accordion player among them, they put on quite a party. The softpaw was starved for companionship. The river pirates had a lot of fun with him, playing like an old cat and her kittens with a mouse.

Then one night, Jimson Weed Jutts and Tieline Boydes took the tripper out 'coon hunting. They put on carbide headlights and had the tripper carry his .22 rifle. They took him about two miles into the bottoms, then had him sit on a log while they circled around to drive game to him across a bayou.

They circled all right, and went back to the shantyboats, took the boy's boat and went on down the river. They thought he was lost, but he was merely duped, and he arrived at Sand Dune Bay in time to see their fleet, his own boat among them, being pulled into the open river by means of motorboat and outboard tows. Of course, he was helpless to save his outfit. The next day the pirates painted the stolen boat a dirty red, and had a lot of fun playing his talking machine with its hundred or so new records.

The piracy was nearly two hundred miles above Mendova. That is a long way for a softpaw to go, but this victim of pirates was determined. He had his .22 rifle and the clothes he wore, which were good. He ate hickory nuts, pecans, wild grapes and game that he killed. He weathered a three day rain, cold and driven by a north wind, by sleeping in a hollow cottonwood tree. He had a little money, less than fifty dollars, but he did not spend any of it except for ammunition and salt.

Every one heard the story within the next week or so. The victim showed up at fishermen's tents on the banks. He came down to shantyboats in eddies. Every two or three days he borrowed some one's razor and soap. He was polite to women and when he ran smack into the Celebration Cut Off, Cold Spring moonshiners, he apologized and minded his own business. The runners liked him for the way he backed away from that proximity, showing he was surprised. They knew, of course, that he was innocent, for the Turtlebacks had come along a few days before and told the joke—how they had taken the softpaw hunting and left him stranded.

"Come have a snack," one of the moonshiners invited. "It's right down on the shantyboat."

"Much obliged," the softpaw said, and ate at the table the first square meal he had had in a week.

Frankly enough he told about losing his boat. He did not act angry. He just let it go at that. Of course, it was hard luck. At the same time, it was not any more that he had expected of life.

"I've always had hard luck," he said. "I've lived square and never harmed anybody."

JUST his gait as he walked, his manners at the table, and the nice way he had of taking off his hat when talking to a woman, as though she were a lady, made a good impression. Whisky Williams was going down light, so he invited the

pirate's victim to go into Mendova with him. Williams was anxious to know all about the piracy first hand, so he could tell the story. At Mendova, Williams took the softpaw up to the gunstore and started him telling the story all over again.

"How'd you make out, coming down the bottoms?" the gunsmith asked.

Then the tripper told how he had lived on the country—nuts, wild grapes, small game. He had even killed and eaten blue herons.

"Going clear down to N'Orleans?" some one asked.

"That's where I started for," the youngster said. Then, with a burst of frankness common in the friendly gunstore atmosphere, he added:

"I've got to go clear down. I started all wrong. My folks are pretty nice people. They live back in New England, old whaling and rum trade stock, I suppose. Fought in the Revolutionary War and figured in the politics of three, four of those Northeastern, Yankee States. It came so that they just naturally expected all the boys in the family to amount to something. I was busted out of college this autumn before we'd been going six weeks. They caught me hazing some freshman, which was the excuse for firing me out. Same time, they were glad to be rid of me. None of us was ever busted out of college before. Just the past three, four generations in our branch have the whole alphabet in their honors, from B.A. to D.Z.—doctor of zoology. They gave me a certificate marked for two years' work, and 'Expelled' written across the face by the dean in red ink. My folks followed that up by giving me the gate. After I pushed off the bank at Pittsburgh, I happened to think I never had finished anything I started so I made up my mind to go to New Orleans. It's a long walk down the levee, but I'm on the way."

Then the little group in the repair shop of the gunstore talked about others who had come down the Mississippi and fallen victims to hard luck, or good and bad fortune in streaks.

"You're lucky those Turtlebacks didn't bash in your head and stick you down in a hole in the ground, or sink you in the river," Whisky Williams remarked.

"Turtlebacks?" he repeated. "Is that what they call that crew of pirates?"

Whisky Williams looked sick. He supposed of course the fellow knew who had robbed him, and there an old river man had neglected to mind his own business like a raw up-the-banker!

"Turtlebacks, eh?" the victim repeated.

"Don't any one know your name," Whisky Williams said.

"That's the first good luck I've had," the young man grinned, sitting back and beginning to think.

When the store closed some time before ten o'clock, the softpaw went out into the chill, raw night with the others. He turned into the first alley to the north, alone, carrying his rifle in his hand.

No one saw the tripper for nearly two weeks. The weather was cold, raw and wet. The gunstore group, able men and generally successful in their own lines, whether sportsmen or criminals, river men or up-the-bankers, had felt a bit of sympathy for the college boy who had been spewed out into the hostile world as a result of pranks and pride. They all knew that he had not a single contact that would help him, no trade, no profession, no business. He had come down the bottoms in consequence, living on the land the same as hogs and birds, feeding hand to mouth, lucky to be alive.

"Notice how he took up that pirate crew's name?" the old gun repairer remarked, getting into the working parts of a coaster brake on a boy's bicycle. "I've an idea we're going to hear more about him."

"Yes?" Palura inquired. "How so? And whereabouts?"

"Somewhere along about the place the Turtlebacks are tied in," the gunsmith suggested.

"Shucks!" Palura exclaimed. "That kid handle Cap'n Boueff? That softpaw put anything over Shaggy Head? They's seven, eight of those fellers, you know."

"I know," the repairer admitted. "They've been having a lot of fun, bragging along down what they done to the softpaw, too."

THE DUCK season had about ended with the passing of the greater part of the autumnal migration. Winter settled down after a rough, raw line storm session. Shantyboaters came flocking along looking for places where the local counties did not charge two hundred and fifty dollars trapping license, and the local trappers and fishermen had not claimed all the bends, brakes, islands and reaches.

One evening, without warning, the softpaw came strolling into the gunstore alone. Whisky Williams had shown him the way, and he had not forgot that cosy little back shop where the good ones met, detectives with criminals, river rats with up-the-bankers, woodsmen with desert riders.

"Why, howdy, Softpaw." The gunsmith gave him a quick look. "Thought you'd gone to N'Orleans?"

"No, I went back up to Celebration Cut Off," the tripper said. "I went into the junking business, you know."

"Junking business! No, I hadn't heard." The gunsmith shook his head. "How's it?"

"Good," the tripper said. "I'm doing some trading, too."

"Commissary?"

"All lines. I brought in some short guns. I don't know if you're interested in them."

"Oh, yes, I handle them."

The softpaw emptied a burlap bag on the floor.

The gunsmith looked over at least a score of revolvers and automatics, some nearly new, some old timers. One he picked up, a .45 with four notches on the home made mahogany grips. He turned a questioning eye on the visitor as the several who sat around, especially Jack Biggar of the Carcajous, Investigations, Inc., were tense with curiosity.

"I have a sales receipt for these weapons," the visitor said. "I don't know where those fellows I dealt with got them, but they sold them to me cheap."

The softpaw drew a paper from his pocket, unfolded and spread it on the work bench before the company.

> We, the undersigned members of the Turtleback pirate crew, do hereby sell and dispose of, and give this our quit-claim deed and ownership paper to one softpaw, Tobius Moregan, in consideration of one dollar and other values, the following: shantyboats, sport goods, motorboats, tackle, outboards, junk, skiffs, Jonboats, tools, equipment, outfit, goods, lines, firearms, personal property. Signed and given under our hand and seal, this day, December 4th, 19—
>
> JIMPSON WEED JUTTS TIELINE BOYDES
> APPLE REACH JOE CAPT. LEO BOUEFF
> SHAGGY HEAD WALTS ISLAND ENDERS
>
> *Board of Directors, Turtlebacks*

"Um-m-m," the gunstore man grunted. "Looks like you'd bought out the Turtlebacks?"

"I paid them one dollar and traded other valuable considerations," the tripper said, without batting an eye.

"Well, I can give you about seventy-five dollars flat for this line of guns."

"That's all right with me," the softpaw said. "I don't care for short guns, myself. I'm selling out a whole fleet of boats and outfits down at the bayou. I'm keeping a dirty red shantyboat which is well found inside. In fact, I'm going on down with just about the same outfit I had when I started up the Ohio at Pittsburgh."

"Then you recovered your boat?"

"Yes, sir. When I was here an old granny name of Whisky Williams was having a lot of fun about how those scoundrels, pretending to be good fellows, left me out in the brakes waiting for 'coons to come along. I didn't have anything but book learning, a good but indignant family and a punk record as a student in college, when I started. But after a while the way I was treated I learned some special extra tricks, and the way I was laughed at made me just plumb mad.

Then I went after those fellows, the Turtleback pirates who'd done me dirt. I didn't know what I'd started till I had to finish it, but I'm harvesting the rewards. Much obliged, sir, for buying these guns."

"I'm glad to—ain't the first time I bought two, three of them," the gunsmith remarked. "I bought this'n wholesale and sold it to Cap'n Boueff himself, 'bout two years ago."

THE TRIPPER auctioned and disposed of, at private sale, the whole pirate fleet, except his own boat. He took aboard his little shantyboat two fine outboard motors and other equipment which struck his fancy. He had a light river cruiser which he sold for four hundred and fifty dollars, and two shantyboats, which brought him together with furnishings, another four hundred and fifty dollars. He had a nice line of hoopnets, second hand but in good repair, and well tarred. He sold several shelling outfits and some miscellaneous launches, skiffs and scows. He must have taken in about two thousand dollars on the sales, and five hundred dollars in rewards for the return of commissary, grocery, drygoods and hardware loot, the Carcajou, Jim Biggar, helping him to send the stuff back.

One day he cut loose and floated away down the river. He was right well respected. Nobody laughed at him. Old river people felt real proud of the genial way in which he bowed and smiled at them. The softpaw had changed his status immeasurably. It was some time after he had gone on his way down the river, finishing the trip he had begun to N'Orleans, when Tieline Boydes came to the gunstore.

Tieline was a slim, peaked faced, lanky river man, his eyes shifty and in his present condition, ragged, unkempt and sorry looking. He was looking for a warm stove. He huddled silently by the red hot stove in the repair shop and there was that in his aspect that led one of the boys sitting there to send out and get a dozen hotdogs and hamburger sandwiches, a can of coffee and a big box of popcorn. Every one took a sandwich, but Tieline ate five, and had half the coffee and a large share of the popcorn.

"Lawse!" Tieline exclaimed, when he had settled back with a sigh of content, warm and fed. "Gem'men! That's the firstest full eating meal I've had in a right smart while. Yes, indeed!"

"How come?" the gunsmith inquired, casually straightening a wire in a baby go-cart wheel.

"'Bout two weeks ago a doggoned scoundrel come on to us up theh b'low Celebration Cut Off. We was playing poker that aftehnoon. He come in, got the drap on us with his .22 an' lined us all up. He made us all sign a bill of sale, an' give us a dollar apiece to bind the bargain. Then he run us up the bank, made us cut loose all them boats we had, an' he floated off down the riveh hisse'f, steering by the Katydid motorboat. Sho' left us dry."

"The law'd never hold you to a bargain made under coercion like that!"

"We couldn't say nothing in no courts," Tieline grumbled. "He jes' had the kibosh on us. He give us the medicine an' we took it."

"Where'd he learn how to make river medicine?" the gunsmith inquired, blandly. "Must have been a bad man to do like that."

Tieline grunted, hesitating.

"Me 'n' Jimpson Weed took him out a spell back, coon hunting. Doggone! We didn't lose him; we jes' turned him loose, that's all!"

"He held quite an auction and private sale here in the bayou," some one remarked.

"Yes, suh, I heard about that," Tieline sighed. "He even c'lected the rewards on goods missing, no questions asked. Where'd that feller come from, anyhow?"

"He was busted out of college, expelled and his folks disowned him," some one explained. "He came from back East . . ."

"I knowed he was bad," Tieline sighed. "Come to meet him twict, I did."

AFRICAN DRUMS

By

T. SAMSON MILLER

THE SUN'S slow crawl across the steel blue sky is done. The swift shadow of tropic night falls from the east. The village outside the stockade of my trading station awakens from the lifelessness of the torrid day. A tom tom sounds, and once more the dance is on. Till midnight the tom toming goes on, accompanied by a patter of bare feet, low, guttural chanting, and the click of ivory wristlets and anklets.

The drum enters into the very soul and being of the African. It provides an outlet for all his emotions. It saves him from sinking into the sheer animalism of primitive existence. The changing binary and ternary rhythms of the maddening dance tom toms fill him with sensuous joy, the war drums arouse him to ferocious courage and tribal patriotism, the talking drums keep him in gossipy communication with the other villages—tell him what the world around him is doing and thinking and the spiritual drums fill his soul with awe and ecstasy, lift him out of the doldrums of savage life to exaltation. He follows the drums that drive the devils from the village, and the tom tom of the minstrel of his tribe interprets the heroic legends.

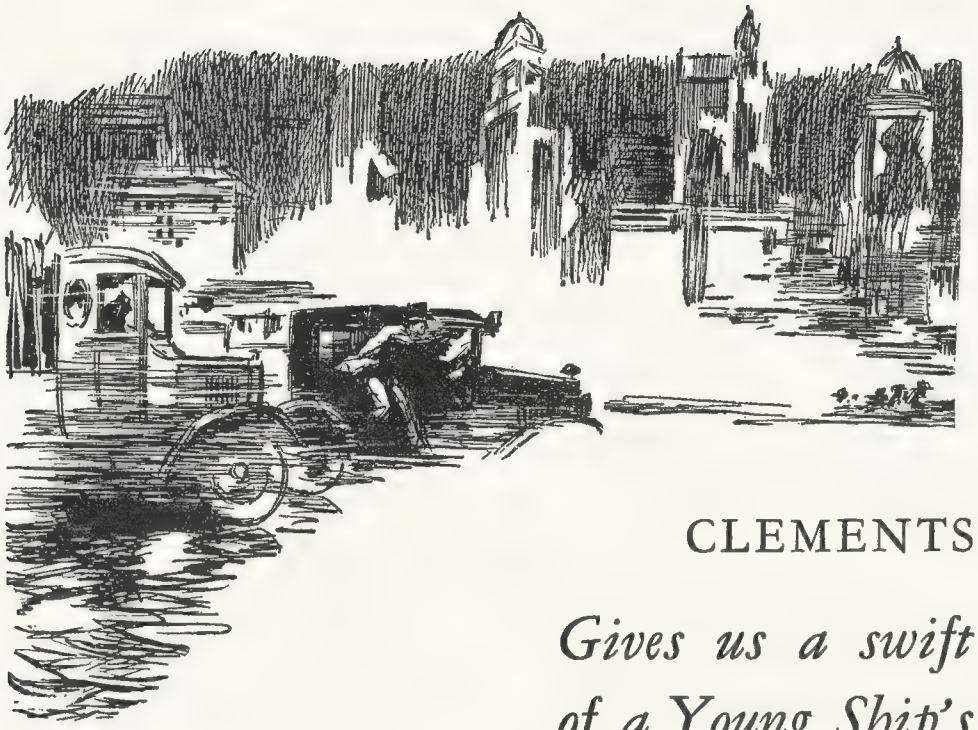
Indeed, the drum enters into the life of the African so intimately that the history of the drums of a tribe is often the history of the tribe itself. The Mohammedans even have it that there is a drum suspended between the earth and heaven, to call men to Judgment Day.

In the hinterlands of the Gold, Fever, and Ivory Coasts the drum takes the place of the battle standards of Christian nations. Around the drums the fiercest of the battle rages, and when the war drums are lost, the tribe is beaten, dishonored. So responsive is the black to drumming, so completely under its spell, that the whites have taken advantage of the fact to get work out of an indolent people. It is a common sight on the Niger to see blacks sitting along planks hung down the iron sides of a steamer and attacking the rust with chipping hammers timed to the soporific beats of a tom tom. The blacks have their hammers tied to their wrists, for they fall asleep working and drop them into the river. And when it comes to cutting a path through the sweltering jungle with machetes, why, it could not be done without a tom tom. On the march the column strides to the beat of drums.

Still, it is the dance drums that mean so much to the African. He practically dances his way through life. The kings of the Niger honor a guest by dancing to him. Young wives with a passionate longing to be mothers petition the favor of the gods by dancing. The dances of the African are not merely idle, sensuous pleasure.

Mostly these dances have ritualistic significance. There is the "Dance to the Ancestral Spirits", the "Dance to the Return of the Shadows", after the long shadowless weeks of the rainy season, the "Dance of Seed Time", when the god of procreation has to be propitiated. Nor are the war dances the senseless things they appear to be. They do more than arouse a fighting spirit. They fix things with the god of war. Then there are the pantomimic dances, such as the "Pursuing Eagle" and the "Escaping Swan", the "Dance of the Monkeys".

The missionaries frown on the dances. But just what is to take their place with the emotional savage? He must have an outlet for his emotions.



CLEMENTS

Gives us a swift
of a Young Ship's

FOURTEEN HOURS

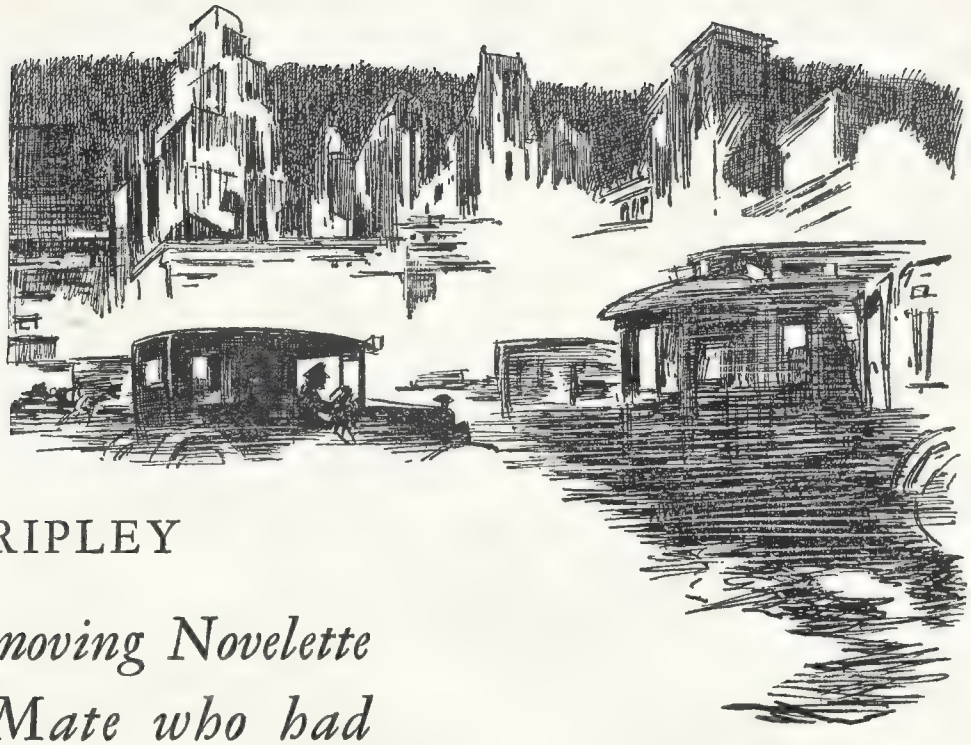
CHAPTER I

MANHATTAN

ALL THE way down the Hudson, past West Point, past Tarrytown with its reminder of "The Headless Horseman", past the Bannerman Arsenal frowning from the middle of the river, past great houses momentarily glimpsed among green trees, McCready had stared from the window with growing fascination until the darkness shut down and there was nothing to see but twinkling points of light in the distance.

Then the lights multiplied, and the wheels clattered steadily over frogs and switches, and endless rows of box cars slid past. He sat back against the green plush of the seat with his breath coming quicker. His fingers went mechanically to the little lump on the side of his jaw—put there by the fist of a Norwegian deckhand in a Manila bar—that always became hard when he was excited.

He did not need that to tell him that he was excited tonight. Not when fifteen minutes more—he glanced at his watch—twenty maybe, was going to bring him into New York. New York, the greatest city in the world—New York, the place he had wanted to see ever since he could remember! Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai—those and their like he knew. San Francisco, Tacoma, Seattle were part of the day's work. But New York was something different, something wrapped in a rosy enchantment of newness and mystery. Riverside Drive, the



RIPLEY

moving Novelette

Mate who had

To See New York

incredible Woolworth Tower, Broadway at night . . .

Mysteriously the train had taken wings. They were running now between lighted second story windows. Streets below, shining under the street lamps, swarming with children. People leaning on window sills, snatching a breath of the sweaty August night, glancing with bored apathetic eyes at John McCready, the new third mate of the *Tepic*, sliding past. A smile from a pretty girl in a slatternly blue wrapper. Back yards—honeycomb cells with an insane crisscross of washlines above.

125th Street. The blue clad Wescott Express man. McCready gave him his trunk check and the address of the small hotel in the lower thirties that a shipmate had told him about. Even when a man has just had a promotion—been made third mate of a big freighter at twenty-two—he does not have to throw it around on expensive hotels, particularly when sleeping is the last thing he intends to do. McCready had until noon tomorrow before he had to be aboard, and what could be seen in that time he was going to see.

He sat back, considering his luck excitedly and a little complacently. It was not every one who was made third mate of a big Yellow Line freighter at twenty-two. Called all the way across the continent to join the *Tepic* at Hoboken, expenses paid. And more, a stopover at Cleveland to get a lot of papers signed by the big shipper there who held the charter. That showed what the owners thought of him, John McCready,

at twenty-two. Without those papers the *Tepic* could not sail, would be hung up at the dock at heaven knew how much a day.

His eye rested for a moment on the brown leather briefcase at his feet, his sister's going away present. He had felt a little funny carrying it just at first—a sailor with a thing like that! But every second man all the way across the country had had one, and presently he had realized that there was nothing sissy about it. It showed that a man was more that just a roughneck sailor, but a business man, too. Responsible. The owners didn't trust important papers to just anybody. Men who were connected with big things carried brief cases as a matter of course.

For instance, there was one—the twin of his own—under the next seat. Its owner was a good looking fellow too, well dressed in businesslike blue serge and with an air about him of being city wise and keen. A little hard, maybe, but all these people in the East seemed a little hard. McCready found himself wishing that he could look a little more like that, that his sandy hair would stay sleek and that he did not grin on any and all occasions and that his six feet did not feel so out of place in the lobbies of big hotels. That fellow was an important business man, probably, lived in New York, was not a bit awed or excited at getting in.

ABRUPTLY, the train plunged from the level of the second story windows into a tunnel. People began gathering up their belongings, moving toward the door.

He picked up his briefcase—the porter had already disappeared with his bag—and joined the line. His heart was beating faster and there was a queer fluttering inside his chest. New York, the greatest city of them all.

There was something electric in the air, he thought, as he stepped out onto the ramp. People hurrying, everybody hurrying—redcaps darting through the press, baggage trucks, men shouting. Made you want to hurry, too. He picked up his suitcase and put his best foot foremost, mingling with the crowd streaming out of the cars ahead.

There was an old lady ahead of him, slower than the rest. He stepped aside to pass her, and in doing so he swung the briefcase across his body, hit it with his knee.

McCready stopped short. His cigaret dropped out of his mouth. A queer look of startled puzzlement came over his face.

He stared down at the case with a terrible, empty feeling. He knew exactly what he had in it, and there was nothing that could have given his knee that solid jar. This one felt heavier, too. It hardly needed his hasty inspection to confirm what he knew already.

He had the wrong one.

For a moment he stood there, incapable of thought, jostled and banged by the hurrying passengers, while a series of frantic pictures formed in his mind. He saw himself trying to explain to the captain of the *Tepic*, telling his story at the company offices. He saw the raised brows, the shrugs, saw his new promotion canceled while the *Tepic* lay in dock and they sent back to Cleveland for duplicates.

He half turned, mechanically, to go back to the car, then remembered. That other case, the mate to his own, under the seat ahead. That was it, of course; he had made the mistake somehow. And the other man had got off first; he now remembered seeing him ahead in the aisle.

McCready broke into a run. He dodged between pillars, swung around luggage laden travelers, incredibly slow, his heavy suitcase entangling itself with their bags or banging against his legs. Some one said—

"Hey, fella, where's the fire?"

Some one yelled at him as he sidestepped an electric baggage truck. He pounded on, oblivious of everything except the fact that somewhere ahead in that hurrying crowd was his case with

his papers, papers the owners had entrusted to him, papers without which the *Tepic* could not sail.

Twice he made certain of his man only to find when he came abreast of him that it was some one else. Everybody was carrying a brown briefcase. A brown briefcase and blue serge seemed to be a uniform in New York. He dodged around a shawled Italian woman, enormous with bundles, stumbled over one of her sticky brood, brought up solidly against a fat man who had chosen that moment to stop and light a cigar. The fat man made a clutch for his hat, dropped his cigar, snarled, "Why'n'tcha look where ya going?" but McCready was already ten feet away, plunging through the crowd for, well ahead and making for the gate, he had caught sight of his man.

It was his man—he knew that this time—but too far ahead to catch before he reached the gate. And once on the other side of that, out of the train sheds, he was gone.

HE PUT all his breath into a despairing shout:

"Hey! Hey there!"

The man glanced back over his shoulder. McCready's heart leaped as he caught a glimpse of the thin sallow features. He waved the briefcase.

Instead of stopping, the man increased his pace. An instant later he disappeared through the gate and into the waiting crowd at the track entrance.

For the fraction of a second McCready's impulse was to throw his suitcase down and kick it. Then sense prevailed and he pounded on again, though without much hope.

The crowd at the gate had closed in, seemingly on purpose to block him. He lost valuable seconds there, plowing through, sidestepping, tripping over feet, apologizing. Then he broke through into the main concourse, and by sheer luck caught a glimpse of his man already half way up the stairs at the farther end.

He put on a burst of speed, raced across the concourse, hurled himself up the stairs, two at a jump. He reached the top just in time to see the other man step into a yellow taxi.

The machine was getting under way. He ran up alongside and waved the briefcase frantically.

"Hey! Hey there!"

The crash of traffic and the *yawp* of motor horns thrust the words back into his throat. He leaped on to the running board.

"Hey!"

The car gathered speed. A hand shot through the open window—thrust against his chest.

"Full up, fella!"

He made a clutch at the door handle, missed, and fell back. The cab swung around the circle toward 42nd Street.

He lost precious seconds before the next in line came up. When it did he flung himself in with a cry—

"Catch that taxi—the one ahead!"

The driver stared.

"Huh?"

"That one!" He pointed wildly at the yellow cab, just swinging out to turn the corner.

"Give you five dollars if you catch him!"

"Huh? Oh—sure."

The driver slapped down his flag. They lurched forward. McCready clung to the side as they careened around the circle. An instant later they whirled into the blaze of 42nd Street.

McCready caught sight of the other cab, well ahead in the stream of moving vehicles, and crouched forward, peering through the front window. They were gaining now, slipping around slower moving cars, weaving through the traffic. A heavy limousine cut in and blocked the view for a moment. Then they slid past it, and crossed Fifth Avenue hardly fifty feet behind.

The driver threw on the gas and swung out toward the middle of the street, and McCready nodded with a breathless—

"That's the stuff!"

Evidently he intended to close in on the other and force him towards the curb.

The maneuver had lost them a little distance, but they were making it up again. As they swept toward Sixth Avenue, with the lighted Elevated Station above, they were almost abreast. Another half a block—

The brakes shrieked and they slowed sidewise to a stop as a jaywalking pedestrian darted almost under their wheels. The driver swore heavily and snatched at his gears. McCready was flung against the back of the seat as the car lurched forward again.

In all the delay was not over ten seconds, but already the other car was half way across Sixth Avenue. Before they could follow, a whistle sounded and the traffic light closed against them.

THEY CAME to a stop in the midst of a jam of panting motors. The driver shrugged and spat.

"Well, there goes five bucks," he remarked.

McCready stared at the stream of up and downtown traffic across their path.

"Can't we get across some way?"

The driver turned his head and stared back at him.

"Say, are you tryin' to kid me? Lindbergh couldn't get across there till they give us the go. Tell you what I can do, though," he suggested helpfully. "I know the driver of that ark we was chasin', if that's any good to ya. 'F you wanna find out where he was goin' I'll ast him an' slip it to ya."

That was cold comfort, but McCready was clutching at straws now.

"I suppose there wouldn't be any use chasing him after they let us through," he said slowly. "Well, all right then. I'll make it worth your while."

He gave the man his name and that of his hotel, and watched him write it on a card.

"It'll have to be before noon tomorrow, though," he told him, "and the sooner the better."

Then, in the faint hope that the driver might be able to suggest something more, he explained his difficulty—the loss of his briefcase with the ship's papers and the mistake by which he had that of the stranger, now lost somewhere in the maze of lights ahead.

"Whyn'tcha open it?" the driver suggested. "Maybe it's got his name an' address inside."

Naturally McCready had thought of that, but the case was locked and resisted his efforts, nor did his key help.

"Bust it open," the other advised.

McCready hesitated. He shook his head.

"I don't like to do that if I can help it—somebody else's case. I'll wait a while and see if you can find out where that other cab went, or maybe the porter at the hotel will have a key that will fit it. There's got to be some way."

All the way to the hotel he struggled with the lock, pushed the latch up and down, jerked at the flap. There had to be some way. He had to find the man and get his own case back, and—he caught a quick unhappy breath at the thought—he had to do it before noon tomorrow.

He glanced at his watch. Something over fourteen hours to find a man whose name he did not even know in a place like New York. He remembered with miserable clearness that New York was the greatest city in the world. Something over six million people.

"And I'll bet," he reflected bitterly, "that five million of 'em wear blue serge and carry brown briefcases."

CHAPTER II

DILEMMA

THE HOTEL porter was sympathetic. He brought keys—quantities of them—keys which would fit almost anything except this particular briefcase. For half an hour or more they struggled over it. Then:

"Tell you what, sir," was his final judgment. "It'll take a locksmith for this job, an' no mistake. I'll have one up here first thing in the morning."

"You couldn't get hold of one tonight?" McCready was desperate.

"I've got to find this man before noon."

The porter shook his head, and there was finality in the shake.

"I wouldn't know where to find one tonight," he told him. "First thing in the morning I'll have one, but if you gotta have it sooner than that you better cut around the lock or bust it."

McCready was beginning to think himself that that was the only chance. He hated to do it. A nice case like that cost about fourteen dollars. But his time was getting shorter with every minute and he would probably have to allow close to an hour to get over to Hoboken tomorrow.

He sat down on the bed to think it over. The other man would probably be unpleasant about having his case ruined, even if he paid for it. Still, as between that and showing up aboard the *Tepic* with the admission that he had lost the ship's papers in any such asinine way as this, there just was not any choice. He did not dare wait for morning and the locksmith. The time to get at this thing was now, while he had the night ahead of him.

On the other hand, there was the taxi driver and his promised call as soon as he had found out the address to which the unknown had been driven. He might ring up at any minute now.

He decided to give him an hour. If he had not heard anything by then, he would take matters into his own hands and break the lock.

For perhaps ten minutes he paced up and down, nervously watching the telephone. But this was not getting him anywhere. He sat on the window sill and stared out across the roofs of the city—dark squares cut by glowing cañons of light. Somewhere in that maze, hidden among six million people, was the man who had his papers, and what chance of finding him?

He threw himself into a chair and picked up the magazine he had been reading on the train. There was a story he had started at Albany and then dropped to look out of the window; maybe that would take his mind off things. It did not.

He could not understand how he had ever happened to make such a mistake. His case had been right under his seat all the time. If the man had only hesitated another ten seconds when he yelled at him there on the ramp—but he had not. It almost seemed as though he had seen him and tried to get away. And he had pushed him off the running board of the taxi.

But that was foolish, of course; the unknown had thought he was trying to get in, trying to bum a ride, maybe. He had a kind of a hard look. Everybody looked hard in New York, talked hard.

It would take two days to get those papers from Cleveland. Maybe three. He was sure to lose his promotion. They might fire him altogether. Probably would! A man who could not carry a briefcase from Cleveland to New York without losing it would not impress owners as a very safe ship's officer.

His glance wandered back to the case, propped against his mirror, and to the telephone. He looked at his watch.

Only twenty minutes gone. But in the meantime—

My Lord, in the meantime the man might have gone to the other station, the Pennsylvania or whatever it was, and taken a train out of town. And he was sitting here, weighing a fourteen dollar briefcase against his whole future.

He was on his feet in a sort of panic. Get that case and get it open—quick!

AT THAT moment the telephone rang.

He drew a breath that was like a sob. He was across the room in two strides and had the receiver off.

"Hello . . . yes . . . hello!"

A voice came, thin drawn over the wide:

"Hello, ziss the Magoon? Say listen, I wanna speak to J. D. McCready. You got it?—J. D. McCready . . . Oh, zat

you, Mist' McCready? . . . Say listen, you come in onna Nooyawk Central tonight, dinja? . . . Well listen, d'ju pick up a brown leather briefcase . . . sure, brown leather? . . . Oh, you did? Well you got the wrong case, see . . . Yeah, you got mine an' I got yours—'s a mistake, see . . . Well listen, how's if you bring it on down to 1013 Tenth Avenue? 1013—you got it? . . . Yeah, sure. Ask for Jim Milvey, see—Jim Milvey . . . Yeah, in about a half hour. I'll be there."

McCready hung up the receiver in a curious daze. He felt weak with the relief of it and the palms of his hands were wet. For a moment he sat on the edge of the bed, staring at the briefcase. Then he snapped to his feet, caught it up, his hat in his other hand, and strode down the hall to the elevator.

Going down, he recovered sufficiently to wonder how the mysterious Mr. Milvey had managed to find out his name and address. There had been nothing in his case to indicate it, he was sure. But that was beside the point. The only thing that mattered was that he *had* managed to find it out, that within half an hour the *Tepic's* papers would be in his hands and after that in the hotel safe. As to how he had been located, anything was possible in New York, the enchanted city of dreams.

He had gone into the hotel sick and helpless with the burden of his anxiety. He came out of it the keen young third mate of the *Tepic*, ready for any adventure the city might provide, once he had those papers in safety.

Rolling across town through dark streets cut at right angles by broad, lighted thoroughfares, he gave himself up to the thrill of it. Fifth Avenue he recognized by the familiar name of one of the big shops whose catalogs he sometimes saw at home, Broadway by a glimpse of blazing electric signs northward at Times Square. He would have a closer look at that later, he decided.

Meantime his cab had plunged into a dim gridiron of streets beyond. He had an impression of couples sitting on the steps in the dark, of high piled scavengers' wagons, of ashcans and cats. And then they turned the corner, swung into a wider avenue, better lighted, and pulled up to the curb.

McCready got out. The driver jerked a thumb.

"There it is."

He hesitated, puzzled and a little taken aback. He had expected a private house or a hotel. Here seemed to be nothing but a dark doorway sandwiched between a cheap clothing store and a quick lunch.

He eyed a group of hard faced young men who lounged in front of a cigar store opposite and cast a dubious glance at the unlighted façade.

"Sure this is right?" he asked doubtfully.

"Sure it's right. Numba ten t'oiteen Tent' Avenue. Reada numba over the door, can'cha?"

The number was there, plain for anybody to see, but that dark narrow entry and the general look of the neighborhood were nothing to inspire confidence. They did not fit, somehow, with the neat blue serge and the general look of prosperous sophistication of the man who had sat next him on the train.

But this was the address the voice on the telephone had given him, and if the *Tepic's* papers were somewhere inside that rather doubtful looking building, then into that building he was going.

He paid off the cab—a third mate's pay, even on a ship like the *Tepic*, does not run to keeping taxis waiting—and went in.

The place did not belie its outside appearance. A set of very narrow, very dirty stairs, dark as a pocket, led up from the street. Once his fingers touched the handrail and the greasy, scummy feel of it set his teeth on edge. The place had a smell, too, a compound of stale cooking and much breathed air and unwashed humanity that set him wondering uneasily.

It recurred to him with considerably more force than before that it was a very

curious thing, the unknown stranger's having been able to locate him so easily, and the thought speedily became a disturbing one.

AT ONE time and another he had heard a good deal about the wickedness of New York. John McCready was not unacquainted with wickedness. Rounding up crews in Far East ports had brought him into contact with some rather fancy forms of it, and there were one or two places he knew of in Seattle and San Francisco where a stranger stood a good chance of coming out feet first. But the very thought of New York was a little overwhelming, and the loss of the *Tepic's* papers had shaken him more than he liked to admit. He could not help an uneasy feeling that there was something queer about it somewhere.

Of course some confidence man might have seen his name on the hotel register—but that would not do. No confidence man would have known of his coming in on the New York Central or the loss of his briefcase. Besides, who would go to that trouble when there was so little to be expected? No, this Jim Milvey, whoever he was, had simply managed to locate him in some way and was trying to get an ordinary mistake put right.

All the same, it was queer—and this was a queer sort of place.

He reached the top of the stairs and found himself in a bare, uncarpeted hallway, dimly lighted at one end by an unshaded bulb. He hesitated blankly before a row of closed doors.

A glance at his watch showed him that it was nearly twelve, and the prospect of having to rouse somebody at this time of night to ask for information was disconcerting. But the importance of getting his case back outweighed any other consideration. He moved over to the door under the light and knocked.

There was a moment of waiting. Then, abruptly, a panel in the upper part of the door slid back to disclose a small barred opening through which a pair of eyes set in a swarthy face regarded him inhospitably.

"Wotcha wan'?" demanded the owner of the eyes in a strong foreign accent.

McCready recovered swiftly from his surprise.

"I'm looking for Mr. James Milvey," he said hastily, for the man behind the panel showed signs of getting ready to close it again. "I thought maybe you—"

"Wotcha wan' weet' 'eem?"

The tone irritated McCready.

"Is that any of your business?" he snapped.

At the same time he felt a sense of relief. Apparently this was the right place, however dubious a place it seemed to be.

The man behind the door eyed him doubtfully.

"He'sa not 'ere," he told him, modifying the truculence of his manner a little.

"Well he's coming. I've got an appointment to meet him here."

The eyes studied him silently. He was beginning to feel ill at ease under their silent scrutiny. Glancing at his watch, he said—

"He'll probably be here in a few minutes now."

The other favored him again with an appraising glance which swept him from head to foot and then said—

"Wait!"

The panel slammed to.

McCready shifted from one foot to the other and irritation grew in him. He was thoroughly out of temper by the time he heard returning footsteps and a different face appeared.

"Whatcha want?" its owner demanded.

"I want," said McCready coldly, "to see Mr. James Milvey. Is that plain, or do you want a diagram?"

The other hesitated a fraction of a second. Then:

"Milvey, huh? No such party here."

Losing his temper, McCready realized, was not the thing to help his case. He tried to keep the sharpness out of his tone as he said:

"I know he's not here yet; but he's coming. That's why I'm here—to meet him."

"Humph—well, y'all wet on that, fella. Milvey's out West inna sticks somewheres. Call s'mother night."

The man made as if to shut the panel again, but this time McCready was ready for something of the sort. He swung the briefcase up and jammed a corner of it into the crack.

THE OTHER, hindered by the bars, made a futile effort to push it out and then threw open the slide again.

"What's the idea?" he demanded angrily.

"I want to see Milvey," McCready snapped, and added, "Good Lord, I'm not trying to raid you," for the sounds from somewhere in the rear—click of dice and a murmur of voices raised in a familiar exhortation—had given him the key to the character of the place.

"As for Milvey being out West," he went on, "he came in with me on the train tonight and we exchanged briefcases by mistake. He asked me to bring his down here and get my own. That satisfy you?"

The eyes behind the panel studied him guardedly for a moment. Then—

"Whyn'tcha say so?" their owner grumbled. "Aw right, come on in."

He swung the door half open and McCready slipped through.

He found himself in a narrow hallway facing a heavy jawed, stockily built individual, coatless, with his waistcoat open and a crownless straw hat perched on the back of his head.

"We gotta be kina careful," the latter informed him in a half explanatory, half apologetic manner. "This new assistant D.A. he's makin' a cleanup right now, an' a guy gotta watch his step. Go on in an' make y'self to home."

He waved toward an open door, whence came sounds indicative of subdued revelry. McCready, obeying the gesture, went in.

It was a large room in which he found himself, some thirty feet square. It might at some time have been used as a stockroom for one of the shops below, he thought, for a row of shelves ran along one side, empty now except for an occasional hat or coat.

But that was the only thing about it which suggested any such legitimate purpose. Sheets of smoke swirled and quivered in the glare of half a dozen unshaded droplights. Across the far end a crude bar had been set up, and a bartender in a dirty apron ministered to the wants of half a dozen hard faced young men who lounged against it, straw hats tilted on the backs of their heads, and talked in low tones. On the other side of the room a group congregated about a long table with a green cloth whence came the click of dice and the clink of coins and occasional bursts of laughter or swearing.

McCready dropped into a chair at one of the small tables along the wall and watched them with a certain curiosity. They were all of a pattern, seemingly—neatly and expensively if somewhat flashily dressed, with sleek hair and highly polished shoes. Most of them had their coats off, for the night was warm and the atmosphere inside the carefully closed room was stifling.

For a little he interested himself in picking out the racial types among them. Jews and Italians seemed to predominate, with here and there the prominent jaw and long upper lip that marks the South Irishman. One thing they seemed to have in common was youth and a certain hard wariness of face and manner that was new to him.

As has been said before, McCready had seen something of tough places and tough crowds before. He had served an apprenticeship with crews that took more than a little manhandling and had taught them to jump when he gave an order. It was nothing new to him to go into some dive after his men and herd them back aboard ship backed by nothing more than his authority as an officer and an ability to hit with both hands. But the robust toughness of a bunch of drunken sailors whooping it up in some waterfront

saloon, and the quiet hardness of these youngsters, not one of whom looked as old as himself, were two very different things. This place was something outside his experience, and the occasional glances which one or another of the habitués threw him, while they held nothing hostile, were somehow disquieting.

He wished that Jim Milvey, whoever he was, would come in and let him get his briefcase and get out.

In the meantime a saturnine waiter approached his table and demanded his pleasure.

"Whatcha want?" seemed to be a formula in this place.

He countered with—

"What have you got?"

"Scotch, rye, gin, Berkley County corn."

A FAIRLY comprehensive list, McCready decided. He did not really want a drink, but since he was here and had to wait anyway— And besides, it seemed to be manners to have at least one for the good of the house.

"Scotch, if it's good," he told the man.

" 'S pre-war."

He disappeared and presently returned with a tall glass of amber color and agreeable enough smell.

McCready tasted it.

"What war do you mean?"

The waiter grinned.

"Well, whatcha ask me for? Think I was gonna tell ya it was made las' week? Half a dollar."

He paid for the drink and sipped it slowly. It was really not particularly bad as whisky went nowadays, and the coolness was grateful to his throat in this stifling atmosphere. He finished it, glanced at his watch—it was now ten minutes past one—and presently, bored by waiting, he ordered another.

The first had set up a comfortable glow inside him by now, and the second, swallowed judiciously, put him rather more at ease. After all, it was too late now to see much of New York tonight, even if the dilatory Milvey should show up in the next few minutes. In the meantime he was seeing a side of the life of the city which, if limited, was at least something everybody did not see. The players hovering over the green table did not look quite as bad as they had a few minutes ago. Probably some pretty decent fellows among them.

He hesitated and then obeyed an impulse of curiosity and wandered across the room.

The table was rectangular, some six feet long, with a block of wood at its farther end against which the shooters threw the dice, cutting the chance for skilful manipulation to a minimum. Occasionally some one stopped a throw midway and handed the dice back.

McCready knew something about crap shooting, and the game looked square. He watched the shooter, a lithe little Italian, make his point and gather in a harvest of small bills and change amid a chorus of exclamations.

"Eighth straight pass!"

"What kina game is ziss anyhow?"

"Ah, he's lucky's all."

The Italian threw down a two dollar bill. Brows went up, shoulders shrugged. A few turned away from the table.

"Not in mine!"

"Hey, Tony, pick it up an' stick in a coupla ones."

The shooter showed white teeth in a grin.

"Thass got you scared, hein? Wassa matta tha' monee?"

He rattled the dice invitingly, grinning around the circle. Several shook their heads. One adjured him again to put out ones. Nobody offered to cover his stake. He put out his hand, slowly, to take it back.

McCready had heard of the belief that two dollar bills are unlucky, but this was the first time he had ever seen any one act on it, and the performance struck him as unbelievably childish. On an impulse he turned to the man with the dice.

"Any objection to my fading it?"

There was a general turning of heads to

stare at him. The man addressed smiled and drew back his hand.

"Your monee's good weet' me," he agreed pleasantly.

McCready slipped two ones from his slender roll and laid them beside the sinister bill.

"Shoot!" he said.

The Italian muttered some unintelligible formula, breathed on the dice, and threw them.

"Seven! Thassa hard luck for you; good luck for me, eh? Shoot tha four."

INTELLIGENCE counseled McCready to leave it alone, but the satisfaction in the faces of the crowd, plus a certain hard stubbornness in himself—legacy of Scotch-Irish forbears—were too much for him. Afraid of a two dollar bill, were they? He would just see how much there was in that theory. Besides, the man had just made his ninth straight pass. By all the rules of luck he could not make another one.

"Fade you," he said, and again the dice rattled down the table.

"Seex! Thassa easies' point onna dize. Watch now!"

The dice fell. Seven!

"And that's that," remarked McCready triumphantly as some one tossed the dice over to him.

He picked them up, rolled them between his palms.

"Shoot the eight!"

He looked around the circle inquiringly. Nobody offered to cover his stake.

"Take that damn' two outa there," some one growled at length.

McCready had established his contention about the ill luck of two dollar bills to his own satisfaction if to nobody's else. Meantime the game was being held up.

He took it out.

"All right, shoot the six," he said. "I'll keep the two for a mascot."

Dollar bills, quarters, halves showered down. He rattled the dice and threw.

"Seven!"

"Shoot the twelve!"

"Shoot the twelve! Come on, dice; roll 'em home, and—there they are!" "Shoot the twenty-four."

It was speedily covered. He threw again—six; threw again and made his point. Forty-eight dollars to the good.

Caution stepped in. He crammed thirty-eight of it into his pocket and left ten on the board. A moment later he made seven on his second throw, and the dice, together with his ten dollars, passed into the hands of a dark eyed little Jew with slim shoulders and patent leather hair.

"You're thirty-eight dollars ahead," intelligence counseled. "You've proved your point about the two dollar bill. Better quit."

"Right!" agreed McCready and moved away from the table.

He glanced at his watch. Half past one. He stepped over to the man with the crownless straw hat who leaned against the wall, picking his teeth with a match.

"Milvey seems to be late," he remarked.

"Yeah."

"Got any idea where he might be?"

The other flicked the match into a cuspidor.

"Depends," he said. "Sometimes he hangs out over to Gilkey's on Forty-fit'. The's a broad up there he plays aroun' wit' some. Whatcha in such a sweat to see him for?"

"I want to get my briefcase back. Whereabouts on 45th is Gilkey's?"

"210, but your best bet is to stay here. If he said he was comin' in he'll prob'ly come."

That sounded sensible. After all, Milvey himself had set the rendezvous. McCready went back to his table by the wall and sat down.

For fifteen minutes or so he waited, growing steadily more restless. Occasionally some one came in, but although he started up expectantly each time the door opened, none of the newcomers proved to be the man he had seen on the train.

Presently, for want of anything better to do, he wandered over to the crap table. The game was bigger now; ten and fifteen dollar bets were frequent. A thirty-eight dollar winning did not look so important.

"And anyway," he told himself, "I wouldn't be any worse off than when I came in. It's all velvet."

There was a five dollar bill on the table. He covered it with another. The dice clicked down the green cloth and bounced back from the board at the end. He collected the two bills.

AT THE end of half an hour he had won something over a hundred dollars. He took his coat off, folded it carefully, and laid it on one of the shelves with the briefcase on top.

"You think Milvey'll be in?" he asked the man with the crownless hat again, a little nervously.

The other yawned.

"Guess so—he gen'lly does if he's in town. Mostly comes in earlier, though."

"Well, I'll give him another hour. If he hasn't shown up by then I'll step around to this Gilkey place you were telling me about. 210, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, 210. If he comes in I'll let him know you're here."

McCready nodded and stepped back to the crap table.

In something like twenty minutes he was over a hundred and fifty dollars ahead. Then, steadily, he began to lose. A quarter of an hour later he saw the last five dollars of his winnings go back across the table."

"You're even now," intelligence spoke again. "Time to quit. You've had your fun."

But—

"Two dollars is cheap enough for the kick I've been getting out of it," he told himself. "Besides, it wouldn't be nice to leave without turning something in to the house."

Forthwith he threw down the two dollar bill that had incited him to make his first bet.

Instantly a wrangle sprang up. McCready, now thoroughly at home, insisted that he had a right to fade a bet with any money that would pass current.

The majority, having nothing to do with it, agreed with him. The shooter gave in at length with a bad grace, threw and lost. McCready picked up the dice and replaced the disputed bill with two ones.

The dice seemed possessed. With hardly a hitch he ran the two dollars up to three hundred.

He glanced at his watch. Nearly 3. Intelligence was screaming warnings at him now.

"Well, that's enough for tonight," he remarked, trying to make his tone sound casual. He picked up his winnings.

There was a chorus of protest from around the table.

"Hey, fella, where's your sportin' blood?"

"Aincha gonna give us a chance?"

He hesitated. After all, it did not seem just the thing, particularly when he had no intention of coming back. Besides, if he should fail to find Milvey and the *Tepic's* papers, the chances were that he would be out of a job this time tomorrow. In that case three hundred dollars would not go very far.

"I might as well be broke as the way I am," he thought.

The speed of the game and the ease with which he had run up his profits combined to make him reckless. He threw the whole roll back on the table.

"All right—one pass for the whole thing. Shoot the works. Who's fading it?"

Nobody offered. Some one said—

"Cut it in two an' give us a chance."

And another added—

" 'S over the limit, fella."

The proprietor, who had been watching with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and his crownless hat on the back of his head, intervened.

" 'S all right—don't hold up his hand. I'll fade it."

HE STEPPED over to the bar and came back with a handful of bills out of which he counted the requisite amount.

"Aw right—shoot!"

The crowd clustered around, jostling for a clearer view. McCready picked up the dice, rolled them between his palms, breathed on them.

"Come on, you seven! Eight! Ada from Decatur—eight me, dice. Two north, now—trot-a-trot! Nine I roll—one south. Ada from Decatur—and there she is!"

He picked up the two piles of bills—stuffed them into his pockets.

"And that," he remarked amid a silence, "is positively all for tonight."

"Huh!" somebody said. "I guess it is. You've cleaned out the table."

McCready took his coat from the shelf and put it on. He picked up the briefcase. He was conscious of a sudden tensity in the silence that made him a little uneasy.

"I guess," he said, "I'll step around to Gilkey's and see if Milvey's there. If he should come in ask him to call me at the hotel, will you?"

A few began slowly to put on their coats. McCready started for the door. He had taken two steps when the proprietor stepped in front of him.

"What's your hurry?" he demanded.

CHAPTER III

MCCREADY USES HIS WITS

WITH the winning of his last throw a kind of excited caution had taken hold of McCready. What he wanted now was to get out of here and put his six hundred dollars in safety. For another thing, he was restless and nervous about Milvey's non-appearance, and he wanted to get around to this other place the proprietor had mentioned and try to locate him.

He muttered something about being in a hurry and tried to go on.

The man sidestepped with surprising agility and again blocked him.

"It ain't late," he insisted. "Siddown an' have a drink on the house. I wanna talk to you."

His manner was friendly enough, if a trifle abrupt. McCready considered swiftly. He did not like to rebuff a man from whom he had just taken three hundred dollars, and besides, he might learn something to his advantage.

He said:

"I don't believe I'll take a drink, thanks—" caution had the upper hand now—"but I'd be mighty glad if you could tell me anything that would help me find this fellow Milvey. I've got to get my briefcase back before noon."

"Oh sure—you'll get it all right." They had sat down at one of the small tables by now.

"You don't wanna get nervous about it. If Jim Milvey said he'd meet you here, he'll come. He must 'a' got held up by sup'm is all."

"You don't know where he lives?"

"Well, 'at depends. Sometimes he hangs out one place an' sometimes another. But he'll be back here if you stick around. Like as not you wouldn't find him at Gilkey's anyhow."

McCready began to realize that the man was making a determined if clumsy effort to keep him in the place. The fact made him all the more anxious to get out.

He got to his feet.

"Well, I'll try it anyhow. If I don't find him there's no harm done, and maybe somebody down there'll know where he is."

"Ah, siddown," the other insisted "Change y'mind an' have a drink."

"No, thanks. I've got to be going."

The eyes under the brim of the crown less hat narrowed. The jaw protruded.

"*Siddown!*" he snapped, and there was no geniality in the tone this time.

McCready threw a quick glance toward the door. There were four of the late gamblers between him and it. The bartender, he noticed, was watching him. A quick dash might get him as far as the door, he thought, but it would almost certainly be locked, and there was the

lookout to be reckoned with. He could hardly hope to get to the street before he was stopped.

He decided to temporize.

"What's on your mind?" he asked as he slipped back into his seat. He tried to make it sound casual.

The other man regarded him approvingly.

" 'At's the idea, fella," he commented. "You don't have to get nasty an' neither do I. Now, how 'bout rollin' me for that six yards you took offa the table tonight?"

THAT was it, of course. If there had been any doubts in McCready's mind they were dissipated now. He cast a quick and helpless glance around the room. As a stranger and the heavy winner of the evening he knew he could expect nothing from the few habitués who remained.

Better, maybe, to give in.

But at the bare thought of that something in him, a certain hard stubbornness, rose up in revolt.

Automatically his fingers caressed the little lump at the side of his jaw. He said:

"I told you that was my last pass before I made it. You had your chance. Besides," he added shrewdly, "if I did shoot with you again, and win, it wouldn't do me any good, would it?"

"You wouldn't win," the other said positively. "Well, I was just tryin' to keep everything nice, but seein' you're set on it you can have it. If you think you're goin' outa here tonight with them six yards y'all wet, see? An' I don't mean however."

"You think you can stop me?"

That was a pure mechanical reaction to the other man's tone. He had no idea what he was going to do.

"Maybe you think I can't," the latter was saying. "An' don't tell me about the bulls either. I carry this precinct in my vest pocket. If you don't believe it, try it. A cop likes a good laugh as well as anybody."

McCready's blue eyes hardened and his mouth set itself in a grim line. Normally he was a pleasant spoken, obliging young man who avoided quarrels, but there was just enough of the Ulster Scot in him to make him a bad man to rob.

He said:

"I won your money and I didn't ask for favors. Now I'm going out of here with it, and I'd certainly advise you not to try to stop me."

The proprietor gave a short bark of laughter. He leaned forward and tapped the table with a stubby forefinger.

"You would, huh? Now listen here—there's me an' the barkeep an' the lookout besides them three." He threw a glance at the trio of crap shooters across the room who were watching them.

"I guess the six of us can handle you," he said easily. "If you got good sense, fella, you'll come across—everything nice an' no roughhouse. We don't want nothin' except what you took offa the table. This ain't no hijack. But if you don't—"

Once more McCready shot a swift glance about the room, but this time there was method in it. Behind the bar he had noticed a door. It might lead only to a closet or an inner room, of course, but he reasoned shrewdly if hastily that a place like this would of necessity have a back way out.

He let his eyes drop and simulated a thoughtful frown.

"If I don't, I suppose you intend to beat me up?" he asked a trifle hesitantly, as if making up his mind.

The proprietor nodded and grinned unpleasantly.

"You're a good guesser, fella. Joe, the lookout, is an ex-pug. He's kin'a old for the ring, maybe, but he's a bird in a roughhouse—an' me an' the barkeep ain't so bad when it comes to that. What more help we need, we'll get it from the boys yonder. Y'own mother won't know ya when we get through. Not gettin' nasty, y'un'stand—just tellin' you. 'S business to tell you."

Once more McCready looked about him, fixing in his mind the relative positions of the three crap shooters and the

bartender. The latter, probably in response to some unseen signal, had edged around the end of the bar, where he would be in a position to make a rush if it came to that.

McCready drew a long breath. There was a queer savage tingling all over him, and the face of the man opposite looked blurred and distorted.

He half rose from his chair as a man might who was about to reach into his trousers pocket.

"Well," he said, schooling his tone to resignation, "if that's the way it is, of course—"

With a sudden, dexterous heave he threw the table over, pinning the proprietor between it and the wall.

AT THE same instant, out of the tail of his eye, he saw the bartender start his rush. He sidestepped—he had been on the watch for just that—and met him with a pivot swing. He hit him across the throat with the edge of his hand, a Japanese trick that had done him good service before. The man collapsed against the wall with a long drawn squeal, and McCready whirled to see that the three gamblers had, just as he had hoped and intended, made a dive for the front door to head him off.

It gave him just the split second he had counted on. Before they could turn he had sprung across the room, briefcase in hand, and reached the light switch.

Two open wires ran to it. He jerked them loose and plunged the room into darkness, but not before the three had seen their mistake and started for him. There was just time to throw himself sidewise before the three crashed into the wall behind him.

There were sounds of a confused struggle, interspersed with much swearing. He picked himself up and launched a swinging kick into the midst of it, felt his foot meet something solid, and heard a yell of pain. A hand seized his shoulder. He ran his own hand up the arm, located the throat, and chopped across it twice with the same blow that had taken care of the bartender. There was the same strangled squeal and the grip on his shoulder relaxed suddenly. He threw it off and darted around the end of the bar.

Yells, oaths, the crash and thump of struggling bodies came from the dark behind him, and the stentorian shout of the proprietor:

"*Get that light on! Get that damn' light on!*"

His hand, groping for the door, closed on a bottle. Almost without conscious volition he swung it up and let it fly in the general direction of the sounds. There was a crash and a groan. He grinned at the thought that one at least was probably out of the running so far as he was concerned. For the moment he almost forgot that he was escaping, not attacking, as he searched feverishly along the shelf at the back of the bar for another bottle.

His hand touched the door casing and that brought him to his senses. He slipped through and closed it softly behind him.

He was in some kind of a corridor now, as nearly as he could judge in the pitch darkness, but where it might lead or whether it might prove to be a blind alley, he had no means of knowing. At least it seemed to lead away from the uproar behind him.

He felt his way, holding the hand with the briefcase in front of him and the other against the wall. He moved as rapidly as he dared, for it could not be long now before the door behind him opened and they came after him. They would be in no pleasant mood either, he imagined, hearing the thumpings and chargings from the room he had left. He seemed to have stirred them up pretty thoroughly.

How far he had gone he could only guess—it seemed a long way—when his foot, thrust out in front with more regard to speed than safety, came in contact with vacancy. He made a vain effort to check himself. The next instant he was half running, half falling down a steep flight of stairs, with a noise to wake the dead.

He was half way down before he caught himself, startled but otherwise unharmed. He paused a moment to listen.

The racket above had stopped. He took that to be a bad sign! It meant that they were taking stock at least; possibly that they had the light on again. In that case it might be a minute or two before they realized which way he had gone, but it could not be long.

Speed was what he needed now, and never mind being quiet. Careless of falls, he plunged down the rest of the flight, and brought up solidly against a wall at the bottom.

FOR A moment the breath was knocked out of him. Then, gasping, still clutching the briefcase, he slid his hand desperately over the surface of the obstruction. There must be a door. There *had* to be a door. People did not build flights of stairs that ended in a wall.

Apparently people did. His hand, groping frantically, found nothing. Then a wild swing of his arm to the right brought up against some projection that barked his knuckles. He reached out again, more gingerly. A moment of scrambling in the dark and then his fingers encountered it—a doorknob.

The door might lead outside, anywhere. There was no time to speculate about that now. He twisted it, pushed, pulled.

For the first time panic took possession of him. The door was locked.

He felt desperately for the key. The keyhole was empty. For a moment he jerked and heaved, waiting for the rush of feet along the hall above that would mean he was discovered. Then he pulled himself together and put his wits to work.

There is a trick of breaking a lock—a swift jerk with one foot against the bottom of the door—that will sometimes work if the lock is a cheap one and the door happens to open toward the breaker. A hasty groping search convinced him that that would not do here. The door opened the other way.

But it gave him an idea. It was just possible, if the door should happen to be old or poorly put together, that he could kick one of the lower panels out and crawl through. He had to try something anyhow and try it right away.

He drew back and swung his foot. *Crash!* Again!

He thought he felt it give a little that time. He braced himself, hands on the door, and swung his foot back again. He let it go.

The door opened suddenly. McCready skated through on one heel, the other foot somewhere about the level of his chin, and sat down with a jarring thud.

CHAPTER IV

MILVEY'S BRIEFCASE

BLINKING, dazed and blinded in the sudden glare of light, McCready sat on the floor and gaped at the figure of a girl in boudoir capand kimono, who stared back at him with wide eyes as startled as his own. He had barely time to see that she was young—hardly more than a child, he thought—and pretty, when she suddenly produced a small nickeled revolver from somewhere in the folds of the kimono and pointed it at his head.

"And who the hell," the child demanded, "d'you think you are?"

The reference to his entrance brought McCready to himself. He got to his feet.

"I—I beg your pardon—awfully sorry, I swear—"

"Ne'mine the overture," she cut him short impatiently. "Just gimme the scenario. What's your idea in bustin' inta my bedroom this time of night. An' talk fast," she added. "Mamma's nervous an' she wants to know whether to shoot or call a cop."

She cocked her head suddenly as a clatter of feet sounded in the hall above. Without an instant's delay, heedless of the menace of the revolver, McCready whirled, shut the door, and threw the bolt.

There was a startled gasp from his hostess.

"Say—"

But McCready was listening to the sounds from outside now. They were coming down the stairs with a rush. He threw a helpless instinctive glance at her over his shoulder.

Her brows went up a little, but she neither moved to unfasten the door nor called out, and the next instant the tumult had swept past them and on into some unknown region below.

McCready drew his cuff across his forehead—a consciously dramatic gesture, took a long breath, and relaxed.

"Let me explain—" he began with some relief.

"You better. They after you?"

He paused a moment, listening to the sounds as they died away, and then nodded.

"I won a lot of money in that place upstairs and they weren't going to let me get out with it. I swear, I'm awfully sorry about the door. I found it in the dark and I thought it led outside or somewhere—"

But she was not interested in apologies. Her tone was swiftly businesslike—

"How much did you get away with?"

"Around six hundred dollars."

She pursed her lips thoughtfully, with a little frown that made her look even younger. She could not have been over eighteen, McCready thought—dark hair and eyes and a look of impudent hardness that had something attractive in it. She was obviously unafraid; the rounded arm, bare where the kimono sleeve fell away from it, held the revolver perfectly steady.

His eyes shifted from her to a quick survey of the place—a plain little bed sitting room, with one comfortable chair, a couple of straight ones, and a davenport with tumbled covers. One thing he noticed was a pathetic pot of yellow jonquils on the window sill. Somehow he had a feeling that a girl who tended a pot of yellow jonquils could not be quite as hard as she sounded.

"Six hundred fish is a lotta jack," she was saying, rather as though she were thinking aloud than to him. Then, suspiciously, "How'd you come to win that much? They don't play no big game up to Pete's."

"I hardly know myself. I was three hundred to the good and—"

He broke off as the noise of returning footsteps sounded from below.

"Listen! They're coming back."

He looked at her appealingly. She glanced from him to the door, seemed to hesitate as though making up her mind while he waited, tense with uncertainty.

The footsteps were right outside now. He heard a voice, he recognized it as belonging to the man with the crownless hat whom he had pinned under the overturned table.

"Well, maybe. It's worth tryin' anyhow."

The words were followed by a bang on the door.

She gave him a swift look and came to her decision. The next instant she had him by the shoulder, pushing toward one of a pair of small doors which led off from the far end of the room.

"Get in there—quick!"

HE DID not need to be urged twice. A moment later he had let himself into a dark little hole smelling of coffee and sardines and cheese—some kind of a kitchenette, he supposed—and shut the door behind him.

Meantime the knocking was becoming louder and more peremptory. He heard the *snick* as she unfastened the bolt, and then a convincingly simulated yawn.

"Well?"

The voice of the proprietor of the place upstairs—Pete, he supposed—raised in greeting:

"Hello, kid."

"Yeah, an' that's all right, too. But what's the idea of wakin' me up this time of night? Where's the fire?"

The male voice became apologetic:

"Say listen, kid, maybe you can help

us, huh? We're lookin' for a tall, kin'a light complected guy come out this way a coupla minutes ago. Maybe you seen him?"

"Say, I ask you! Do I look like I had a tall, kin'a light complected guy stuck behind my ear or sup'm? Say if that's what you woke me up for, how's if you chase y'selfs outa here now an' lemme get my sleep?"

"Ah, no good gettin' hard about it, kid. We heard him bangin' onna door down here an' we wanna see him."

McCready caught his breath. But the girl seemed equal to the emergency.

"Sure he was bangin' onna door," she agreed. "Somebody anyhow—I never ast him was he tall an' light complected. He wanted to know how to get outa here an' I told him. An' listen here," she added in no uncertain tones, "it ain't the first time, either. Every souse comes through here bangs on my door, an' I'm gettin' sick of it, see? A lady's got a right to some privacy an' if you can't let 'em out the front way—"

"Easy, kid, easy," he soothed her. "I'll speak to 'em about it. But listen—this wasn't no souse. This guy come inna joint upstairs—everything nice an' friendly, see—"

The voice of one of the gamblers cut in:

"Ah, lay off the banana oil, Pete. She knows where he is. Say listen, you: if he went on out, how'd he bolt the door behind him? Bolted onna inside, see?"

There was a general chorus of agreement. Some one growled—

"Come on across, kid, or we'll make ya."

McCready's muscles tensed and he took a half step nearer the door. He did not want to go out there and be manhandled. He wanted desperately not to. But if they were going to try anything like that—

Then he drew a long breath and relaxed, for she was speaking again, and she seemed amply able to take care of herself. He could almost see her, one foot a little advanced, one hand on her hip, chin outthrust in the traditional attitude of woman at war.

"Well, f'heaven's sakes!" her voice shrilled. "You an' who else? Get outa here now, y'apes, before I call a cop. What kin'a deal y'think y'pullin' anyhow, bustin' in on a lady like this? You'll look swell in court, you will—an' I know a few things about that joint upstairs an' don't you forget it. An' I'll tell 'em, too, an' don't you forget that either. You lay a finger on me an' I'll yell so they can hear me in Harlem. Want a sample?"

There was an uneasy stirring, a mutter of protest.

"Ah, listen, kid, listen, will ya? We don't want no roughhouse nor neither do you. Listen, don't pay no attention to what Louey says. Louey, he's sore, an' who wouldn't be, because this guy beaned him with a pair o' brass knuckles. Looka his head, how it's cut open!"

That would be the bottle, McCready thought. It was a satisfaction to know.

"Say, listen; this guy come inta the deadfall upstairs an' hijacks us, see? Takes six hundred outa the cash register. Y'ain't gonna let no bum from crosstown somewheres get away with that, are ya?"

She yawned again, ostentatiously.

"Is it my cash register?"

"Ah, listen now; there's somethin' in it for you. Listen, just as quick as we shake 'at six hundred out of him I'll slip ya a nice piece o' change. Fifty fish—how's 'at, huh? Half a yard just for shootin' square with us. Pretty nice money, I'll say."

IN THE moment of silence that followed, McCready's heart seemed to stop. His hand, groping cautiously in the dark, closed on the neck of a bottle. Smash it over the first man's head and then stab with the broken fragment—he'd heard of that being done somewhere. He moved a step nearer the door.

The girl spoke:

"Yeah, an' that's all right, too, Pete. Only I tell you I ain't seen him. Howda I know where he went to? This ain't the only room in the building, is it?"

"Maybe not, sister, maybe not. But you know a whole lot more'n you're tellin', see, an' I ain't gonna forget it either."

"Oh go lay down. Whaddaya take me for—an information bureau?"

"Yeah, but where'd he go to then? Come through, sister, come through."

"Oh, get on outa here. The fella's prob'ly half way to Yonkers by this time while you gorillas stand around an' gawp like you never seen a good lookin' girl in her lingerie before. What the hell d'you expect me to do? Put salt on his tail for you?"

They hesitated. Then somebody said: "Ah, come on. We're wastin' time."

There was a reluctant movement toward the door.

The man with the crownless straw hat fired a parting shot.

" 'S all right about that, but maybe you think y'gonna get your boy friend outa here after we're gone. Try an' do it."

She yawned convincingly.

"Trot along, Pete, an' take your animal act with you. Don't you think a girl's got nothin' to do after a hard day but listen to the drip you hand out? Sit up an' watch my door if y'got nothin' better to do, but watch it from the outside. Go on now—exit laughin'."

There was a muttering, a shuffling sound. McCready heard her shut the door and bolt it. Then, after a moment during which he surmised that she was waiting on a chance that one or more of them might be lurking outside, she came across swiftly and opened the door to the kitchenette.

McCready came out, dazzled by the light, a little shame faced.

"I certainly want to thank you—" he was beginning, when she cut him short abruptly.

"Ne'mine that, fella. What about that six hundred? Y'got it?"

He made a startled gesture toward his pocket.

"Of course."

"Push it over."

"What?"

She gestured impatiently with the hand that still held the nickeled revolver.

"Push it over, I said. You want them gorillas back here?"

The thing was so totally unexpected that for the moment it threw him off his balance. He stared at her.

"Say—"

"Listen here!" Her tone was sharp with wearied patience. "If you wanna go outa here all in one piece, come through. Now listen, fella—" as McCready made no move to comply—"I mean business. I didn't stand off that gang an' get myself in wrong with Pete for my health. If you hijacked his place an' got six hundred out of it, I got as much right to it as you—more if you ask me. So come on—hand it over."

Possibly if she had used a different tone, put it differently, there might have been a chance of his agreeing. There was a lack of fear in her that appealed to him, and unquestionably she had saved him from a bad mauling. But the streak of stubbornness in McCready leaped to meet a threat of coercion.

HE GRINNED—an ungrudging tribute to her cool singleness of purpose—but there was a set look to his jaw and a light in his eyes that argued badly for her chances of getting the six hundred.

"I'll tell you what I will do, though," he compromised. "I heard him offer you fifty. I'll give you seventy-five to show me how to get out of here."

"Yeah? Thanks for the buggy ride. Six hundred or back comes the gang."

She moved toward the door, purposefully. McCready felt a thin stream of perspiration trickle down the back of his neck. He watched her finger the bolt, saw her hesitate.

It was a thing so slight that he could not have defined it even to himself—some little change of expression, perhaps—but something told him in that minute that she wasn't going to open the door. He knew it definitely when she turned

back to him, questioningly, her hand on the latch.

"Six hundred? Or do I holler?

"And believe me," she added, as he did not answer, "Mamma's got a holler in her that'll make the Statue of Liberty turn round. Well?"

He smiled.

"You're not so crazy about telling Pete how you fooled him the first time, are you? And have you got any idea that he'll give you fifty now? Because I know something about Pete, remember, and I know he doesn't part easily. Better take my seventy-five and come away from that door like a good girl."

"Who you callin' a good girl? Don't get fresh with me, fella. I've a good mind to call a cop and get you run in."

The game was in his hands now. He watched her with a quizzical smile.

"Do that," he agreed pleasantly. "Police protection would suit me down to the ground right now."

"Yes, it would—with the stuff you hijacked outa Pete's place right in your pocket, an' me to tell 'em who you are. Yeah, you'd be tickled to have me call a cop."

She made a motion toward the telephone on a small table near the door.

"Go on," he said imperturbably, as she hesitated. "I'd save the seventy-five I was going to give you, and it would be simple enough to prove I'm no hijacker. For one thing, I haven't even got a gun."

She glanced swiftly at the revolver in her own hand and slipped it under the folds of her kimono. She raised her eyes and they stared at each other, she defiant, he with a sense of amused triumph.

Then she shrugged her slim shoulders, and the movement was an acknowledgment of defeat—for the moment. McCready, in spite of his self-assurance, breathed more freely when she walked over and sat down on the bed.

"God knows you don't look like one," she admitted warily, "or talk like it. But if you're not a hijacker, what was you doin' in Pete's place?" She scrutinized him slowly.

"You're no crap shooter either," she added.

The question recalled him suddenly to his main purpose. He had almost lost sight of it in the excitement of the past fifteen minutes.

He said—

"I was looking for a man named Milvey—"

"Jim Milvey?" She looked up swiftly.

"Good Lord, do you know him?" This was a piece of luck beyond anything he deserved.

"Have you got any idea where I can find him?"

She frowned.

"Yeah. I know him—some. Say listen, what you got to do with him?"

He swung up the briefcase for her inspection.

"I've got his case and he's got mine. I've got to find him by noon. Come on, now, be a good girl and tell me where I can locate him and how I can get out of here. They said something about a place called Gilkey's—"

"Yeah, on 45th." She nodded. "Say, howda you come to have his case?"

Hurriedly he told her the tale of the mistake on the train, the unsuccessful taxicab chase, the telephone message to his hotel, ending with the non-appearance of Milvey at the dive upstairs and his fight over his winnings.

HER EYES widened.

"An' you claim you never was in the city before? Just some hick outa the sticks—Seattle, or what was it? My Lord!"

"It's a city of something like a quarter of a million people," he told her with a touch of offended dignity. "And they aren't exactly hicks either."

She smiled pityingly.

"Naturally they gotta say so."

At another time he would have been delighted to put her right, but now, with the fresh impetus of her knowing Milvey, he was itching to get out and get started. He said:

"Come on now—tell me how to get out

of here and where I can find Milvey. It's worth seventy-five dollars to you, you know."

She looked up at him from under dark brows, eyes coolly unbelieving.

"Sounds to me like a lotta mahoola," she asserted. "Still, maybe you're tellin' the truth at that. I guess nobody would claim to live in a place like this—what was it; Seattle?—unless he did."

She stared at the floor for a moment, frowning, her lower lip caught between her teeth.

"What's in that briefcase?" she demanded.

"I don't know—haven't opened it. My key won't fit it. It doesn't make any difference anyway," he added. "What I want is my own back. Come on. How do I get out?"

To that last she did not bother to reply.

"It might make a whole lot of difference to me," she told him cryptically. "Bust it open."

"Not on your life. I've had trouble enough tonight. I'm not going to have a row with Milvey when I find him."

"I'll fix Milvey." She made a gesture to indicate that this would be the simplest thing in the world.

"Bust it open an' le's see what's in it."

She took it out of his hand and felt the outside, squeezing and poking at the bulge that had hit his knee coming up the station platform.

He reached for it.

"Why do you want to know?" he protested. "What difference does it make to you?"

She swung it out of his reach and tugged at the lock.

"I got my reasons," she asserted, without bothering to say what they were. "Gimme that razor blade off the bureau there."

"Let it alone!" He spoke a trifle sharply. "I don't want it opened."

"You wanna find Milvey? Or don't you?"

She was worrying the flap between two small hands.

"Of course I do. But—"

"Go on—hand me that razor blade then. Say, listen, fella, you might be all you say, but you're only a lousy yegg to me. If I call a cop you might get outa here with your six hundred, but you'll never get away with that case. I'll swear to God you busted in here an' pinched it, and Pete'll back me up. We'll make it stick, too. Now what about it?"

She faced him, one hand on her hip, the other clutching the handle of the briefcase. McCready eyed her, half irritated and half amused. It struck him that it was like being defied by a sparrow.

But her logic was absolute. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right, have it your own way."

After all, what he wanted was to find Milvey and get his own case back. If it was the whim of this impudently attractive child to open this one and ruin it in the process, that was only a minor incident in this insane night. He could buy Milvey half a dozen briefcases and hardly miss it from his winnings.

He handed her the blade and watched her cut expertly around the lock, the tip of her tongue protruding pinkly between white teeth as she worked.

"There!" she made a final slash and ripped the flap open.

"Now le's see what he was carryin'."

The first thing she drew out was a flat case of green cloth, some twelve inches long and six wide. It was heavy, and clinked as she threw it on the bed. McCready thought he identified the thing that had struck his knee coming up the ramp.

As long as the thing was open, he decided, he might as well find out what he could about its owner. He unfastened the strings that tied the cloth flap and unrolled it.

What he found was a set of tools—chisels, pliers, a glass cutter, obviously of the finest steel.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"Second story worker's kit," she informed him after an incurious glance.

"Guess you ain't any yegg at that or you'd have reco'nized 'em."

As she talked, she dug through the compartments of the case like a terrier after a rat. A dirty shirt, two soft collars, a tube of shaving cream.

He stared.

"You mean this Milvey's a second story worker?" he demanded incredulously.

He knew by this time, of course, that there was something queer about the man he was seeking, but it came with something of a shock to be brought face to face with the fact that he was an actual professional criminal.

She nodded coolly, continuing her search.

"Sure—one of the best. He's been on—here it is!"

She took out a thin roll of black velvet and flipped it open on the bed.

The girl sat back with a little gasp. McCready craned over her shoulder.

A THIN chain of platinum held the thing together; the diamonds that winked blue-white against the black background, the square cut ruby that smoldered sullenly in the center, the cool liquid fire of the emerald drop beneath it. Even McCready, who knew nothing of stones and cared less, caught his breath.

She was staring, her hands clasped in front of her breast, her lips parted. Then McCready moved and she pounced on the thing like a cat. With the same motion she slipped away from him and on to her feet in a swirl of black and pink silk.

"Wait a minute! What's the idea?"

She was facing him, back against the door. He could see the rise and fall of her breast as her breath came fast beneath the black kimono. As he took a step nearer she slipped her hands behind her with the instinctive gesture of a child trying to hide something.

An uneasy doubt seized him. He held out his hand.

"Give it here!"

"No!"

She shook her head. The word was more a motion of her lips than a sound.

McCready bit his lip and frowned. This was a complication he had not foreseen. It might be pretty unpleasant unless he handled it right.

He backed away a little and dropped his hands to his sides.

"Look here," he said.

He spoke quietly, even casually, as one might to a frightened and possibly dangerous little animal.

"Better put that thing back in the case, hadn't you? It might get lost or broken or something."

He held the case open invitingly.

She shook her head. She had found her voice this time.

"Try an' make me!" she said.

"Well, I could, of course. But that's just kidding," he added soothingly, and forced a smile. "Naturally you'll put it back in a minute—after you've had a chance to look at it. Pretty thing, isn't it?"

She did not answer that for a moment. Instead she looked at the floor, frowning. Then, suddenly—

"It isn't yours," she said.

"Of course not. It's Milvey's."

"Like hell! It's a hot one—bent. You know that as well as I do. Milvey got it porch climbin' somewheres out West."

"I suppose so," he agreed. "But that isn't the point. So far as I'm concerned it's his. All I want is my briefcase back and he can have his and that too. I'm not mixing in."

She stared at him.

"You're gonna *give* it to him?"

"Certainly. I want my papers and that's all."

She looked at him, insolently incredulous. Then something in his face told her that he was in earnest, and her lips parted and her eyes widened.

"Well for cryin' out loud in the night!"

He said persuasively:

"Come on now. Let's have it!"

She shot a quick furtive glance at the

thing, cupped in the hand at her side, and looked back at him.

"Say are you cuckoo or am I? D'you know what that thing's worth?"

McCready kept his patience with an effort. He might be quick enough to snatch it from her, he thought, but she would probably fight like a wildcat—scream, maybe. No telling what she might do. Better try to get it peaceably first. Hard to wait, though, when he was on fire to get started and find Milvey.

He said:

"Look here, we're wasting time. That thing isn't anything to me except to get my papers back. You can believe that or not, but I've got to have it and I'm going to. If I have to I'll step over to the phone there and call the police to decide it."

"Yeah—an' have 'em find you in my bedroom with that kit of tools and this thing on you? An' don't you believe I won't frame you, either." She stared at him defiantly, one dark eyebrow raised a little.

"I'd do murder for this, an' I don't mind tellin' you."

HIS ANSWER to that was to step over to the bed and possess himself of the little revolver she had left there. She made a swift movement as if to forestall him, checked herself when she saw that it was too late, and glanced again, quickly, at the pendant in her palm.

McCready broke the gun and tipped the shells out into his hand.

"Not that I think you'd go as far as that," he said pleasantly, as he dropped them into his pocket, "but just to be sure."

"Think you're pretty smart, don'tcha? Well, whatcha gonna do about it?"

But McCready's mind was made up. He had begun to see a way.

"I could take it away from you, of course—"

"Try it!" she interjected.

"But that would be messy and I'd rather not. What you said about the police gave me an idea."

She looked up at him, a quick fear in her eyes.

"I'll admit I didn't want 'em before I'd seen that pendant," he was going on inexorably. "But now it's different. Do you realize that there isn't a police office of any size in the United States that won't know all about that thing by now—who it belongs to, and where it was stolen and when? Who stole it, too, probably. Try making 'em believe it belongs to you."

He paused to let it sink in. She was looking down at her foot now—a slender, bare foot tracing patterns on the floor as he talked.

"Milvey got on the train at Buffalo—" He did not know that, but he was taking a chance that she did not either. "He got on at Buffalo, and I can easily prove that I was in Cleveland or on the train all that day and the day before. Besides that, there's the taxi driver—I've got his name and number—and I can prove by him that I was trying to catch Milvey to give him this case and get my own back. How does that strike you?"

Her gaze was still on her foot, and there was a worried crease between her eyes.

"Well, what about it?" he demanded, a little more sharply. "I don't want to call the police if I can help it. It might delay my getting my own case back. But I will if I have to. Better make up your mind, because I'm in a hurry."

She stole another look at the pendant. Seeing her face, McCready felt, unreasonably, like the lowest of created things.

"Come on!" he persisted inexorably. "Hand it over."

For a moment her decision seemed to hang in the balance. She looked up, pleadingly, drew a long breath. Her shoulders sagged.

"Take the damn' thing!" she spat and flung it at him. "Oh, Gees," she wailed, "I might have known I wouldn't get a thing like that. Oh, damn my luck!"

CHAPTER V

THE ESCAPE

SHE WATCHED with hungry, cheated eyes while he wrapped it hurriedly in its square of black velvet and slipped it into the case. Once, while he was piling the rest of Milvey's belongings on top of it, he glanced up at her. After that he kept his eyes resolutely on the work at hand. He was not going to let himself begin feeling sorry for her.

"You've got seventy-five dollars coming anyway," he reminded her in a vague attempt to be comforting.

She nodded apathetically, and then, returning to her normal manner with an obvious effort,

"An' maybe you think I'll let you forget it either. Chase y'self into the kitchen there an' shut the door while I get some clothes on. We gotta be on our way."

"But look here, you don't have to do that. All I want you to do is to tell me how to get out of here—and where I'm likely to find Milvey, if you know."

"Maybe—but that ain't what's gonna happen. I'm gonna see you hand that over myself."

He weighed the idea swiftly. After all, if she knew where to find Milvey—

"Well, all right," he agreed.

"You betcha life it's all right. Maybe you wanna find Milvey, an' maybe you don't, but either way I'm gonna be right there and get mine. Don't you worry."

"You think you can make him give you something on account of what you know?"

"Him or somebody," with a glance of suspicion. "If you're straight about wantin' to find him I can help you. And if you ain't, why I'll be right along with you, see, right along with you. Hurry up now; we've fooled around long enough."

Obediently McCready stepped into the dark little kitchen again. He took the briefcase with him.

"If it makes you any happier," she agreed. "You can't get out except through here."

Five minutes later when she called he found that she had put on a scanty yellow dress and a little close fitting hat. The combination made her look more like a child than ever.

"Lay offa that!" she told him sharply as he laid his hand on the door knob.

"Fire escape's our out."

"Think they may be laying for me?"

"What those apes would do for six hundred berries, I'd be ashamed to tell you. Come on."

She opened the window gingerly and slipped out. A moment later McCready followed. He swung on to the iron ladder and went down, feeling his way silently from rung to rung until he dropped off the last one and found solid ground under his feet.

Presently his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and he saw that they were in a narrow yard like those he had seen from the car window coming into the city. It was enclosed by a high board fence and shut in by the dark bulk of buildings above.

He twitched his shoulders uncomfortably. It was an airless, soundless place, smelling of garbage cans, and stiflingly hot. The thought that eyes might be watching them from the lightless windows was disconcerting. He was glad when she touched his arm and flitted into the shadow by the wall.

SHE FOLLOWED, gripping the handle of the briefcase, feeling his way along the fence behind her. Once a cat yelled, a sudden shriek, and his heart seemed to leap up and turn over, but the sound died away again and left the place as still as before. He mopped his forehead and moved on as silently as possible.

Then there was a faint click and a rattle. He saw that she had stopped and was straining at the handle of a gate.

She stepped back helplessly.

"God! It's locked!" she whispered. "What're we gonna do now?"

The very real panic in her tone startled and at the same time stiffened him. He moved up a little.

"Here, let me try."

He pushed, twisted, pulled, but to no purpose.

"We'll have to go over."

She glanced in dismay at the seven-foot fence confronting them.

"Gee, how we gonna do it? If we had a ladder—"

"There was an empty ashcan back there," he told her, his lips close to her ear. "Wait a minute."

Cautiously he slipped back and got it, set it against the fence.

"Climb on that and I'll give you a boost."

She glanced over her shoulder fearfully.

"It's gotta do, I guess. Gimme your hand."

He had not dared turn the can bottom side up for fear of the noise. He steadied it as well as he could, helped her climb up and stand on the rim.

"Slip me the case," she whispered down when she stood above him, her hands grasping the top of the fence. "I'll drop it over."

"Yes you will!" he thought.

He grinned under cover of the darkness.

"Thanks, I can take care of it all right."

In the moment of silence that followed he could feel her hate him, but she only said:

"Well, go on then. Gimme a boost."

He gripped her ankles and lifted. She was a slim little thing to look at but, cramped against the fence as he was, her weight taxed him before she was able to shift it to her hands on top of the fence.

"All right?"

"Yeah. Leggo."

He did, and stepped back. Her foot in its high-heeled shoe flicked past his ear, viciously, and he chuckled audibly as she swung her legs over. Somehow the thought of her silent fury lent a piquancy to the adventure that it had lacked before.

He heard her drop softly on the other side, and climb on to the can, balancing precariously on the narrow rim, his head and shoulders just clearing the top of the fence.

He braced himself to spring.

At that moment his foot slipped. The can spun out from under it and rolled across the yard, banging and reverberating like stage thunder.

Somebody yelled—

"There he goes!"

A door banged open and a shaft of yellow light cut the darkness behind him. Hanging there by his hands, he threw a swift glance over his shoulder and saw the figure of a man framed in the opening.

The next few seconds were a nightmare. There was another yell and an answer from somewhere inside the building. He heard a sharp echoing smash and then another. Something whacked the fence a few feet from where his hands clung desperately and he thought, with a sort of frantic calmess—

"Now they're shooting at me!"

All the while he was squirming, twisting, trying to get his feet over the top.

SOMEHOW, with a sudden swing and heave he managed it. He was conscious that one way or the other it was a matter of a split second now, and for an agonizing age he hung and wriggled and strained, hampered by the briefcase. Then the pistol cracked again and a lancelike tongue of flame stabbed the dark, and at the same instant he made a final effort and hauled himself up.

There was no time to pick his method of landing. He let go and came down heavily at full length on the other side.

It knocked the breath out of him. For a moment he lay there, twisting in an effort to get it back. Then he was conscious that sone one was pulling at the briefcase in a series of frantic tugs, and he jerked it away determinedly and somehow got to his feet, sick and dizzy.

The tugging had transferred itself to his arm and a terrified voice was whispering:

"Oh, come on! Hurry! Oh, *hurry!*"

From behind the fence came sounds of

excited scramblings, the rattle of the handle of the gate, an oath.

"Oh, come on!"

Then they were running down a dark alley between the high fences towards a glow of light, infinitely far away.

"Oh gee—oh gee!"

It was a despairing gasp. He saw her quicken her pace in the gloom and shoot ahead of him, and the note of panic in her voice was more even in the way of a spur than the shots had been. He ran a few more strides and looked back. He thought he saw a dark shape on top of the fence where they had just come over, but he could not be sure. He did not wait for any more. The possibility, and the knowledge that they were outlined now against the light from the farther end of the alley were enough to keep him going whether he had breath to run with or not.

For what seemed an age she flitted ahead of him, while he pounded after with the blood beating in his temples and his legs like water. The glow of the lighted street was nearer now.

And then she stumbled—slackened—threw her arm across her face with a sobbing cry:

"Gee, I'm done . . . I can't—"

He threw an arm around her, half dragged and half carried her towards the lights and safety; and it was so, locked together in a staggering run, that they out of the mouth of the alley into the street and the arms of a blue-coated patrolman.

CHAPTER VI

REJECTED ADVANCES

"WHAT'S all this? What's all this now?"

McCready opened his mouth but no sound came out. The girl had collapsed against the house wall, panting. The patrolman looked from one to the other, frowning suspiciously, alert to forestall any attempt to make a break for it.

"Well, what about it?" he demanded again. "What about it now?"

McCready stared at him dumbly, like a stranded fish. The street lamps spun mistily before his eyes. His mind was a blank.

"We've been running—" he managed, conscious of the absurdity of what he was saying.

"Have ye now? Well, who'd have thought it?"

The girl made strange gestures and strangled sounds, out of which came the word—"husband".

"Ye mean he's ye're husband—" with a jerk of the thumb towards McCready. "Humph! I thought not. Ye don't find husbands runnin' the streets like that wit' their own wives at four in the mornin'."

He pursed his lips.

"I've a good mind to run the two of ye in," he asserted. "It looks fishy to me. Well, what about it?"

The girl had found her voice again.

"You can't touch us," she panted. "We ain't done anything."

"Can't I?" He swung his nightstick importantly, a grizzled, imposing figure in the light of the street lamps.

"Well now, it looks to me like ye're suspicious characters, the both of ye. There's this girl bandit I see in the papers. I've an idea a night in the cooler an' a bit of explainin' to the sergeant 'll be good for ye both."

McCready glanced desperately down the deserted street, shining under the arc lights. He stared back at the officer, remembering what he had in the briefcase. Easy enough to speak boldly about calling the police back in the room, but now, with an uncomfortable chill along his spine, he was beginning to realize that that had been a very different thing from being caught running up a back alley at four in the morning carrying a set of burglar's tools and obviously stolen jewels worth heaven only knew how much. He pictured himself trying to explain that to a hard boiled desk sergeant—with all the terrifying and humiliating consequences that arrest means to the average citizen.

He moved nearer in a sudden panic,

urged by some vague, mad idea of hitting the policeman and running for it. But before he could put it into effect the girl, who may have divined his intention, seized him by the arm.

"Listen," she pleaded, still breathless, "we ain't done a thing. My husband seen us together—"

"Ah! An' this is the boy friend, huh?"

He turned on McCready savagely.

"So that's it, is it—runnin' off wit' a man's wife an' she nothin' more than a child. By God, if I'd my way, I'd put ye up the river for a stretch would make ye're teeth rattle. It's the like o' you slick haired, perfume smellin' drugstore cowboys—"

He stopped short and eyed McCready doubtfully, evidently suddenly conscious that his six feet of clean bone and muscle, his hard outdoor look, didn't fit the picture.

"Well anyway," he finished a little more mildly, "it's a dirty trick ye're playin' an' ye'd do well to take that child back to her man. Runnin' out the back way at four—"

"Ah, forget it," she interrupted him insolently. "You're just tryin' to prove you're a cop. Lay off him, willya. What business is it of yours anyhow?"

He turned back to her undaunted.

"Ye she'd be ashamed o' yerself," he told her, "sneakin' out like an alley cat—Where is this husband o' yours?" he broke off to demand suspiciously. "Ye were runnin' fast enough from him a minute ago. What's keepin' him?"

"Ah, how do I know? Maybe he seen you an' got cold feet."

"Did he now? Well what would he get cold feet for at seein' me? It sounds funny to me, young lady, let me tell you."

He pointed with his nightstick.

"What's in the bag now?" he demanded.

McCREADY stared down at it as if he were seeing it for the first time, while his heart seemed to stop beating. He had accepted the humiliation of the position into which the girl had put him without a word—gratefully even, if it would get them past this obstacle. But now he was sure the game was up. For the life of him he could not think what to say.

"The bag—" he was beginning stupidly, playing for time—"why—"

The girl broke in defiantly:

"It's my clo'es, if you gotta know. Ain't a girl got a right to walk down the street with her own private stuff without one o' you flatties buttin' in? It's an extra dress, if it's any o' your business, an' a pair of stockin's an' a pink silk shimmy—"

The patrolman looked doubtfully from the briefcase to the scantiness of her yellow dress and shook his head, but to McCready's infinite relief the explanation seemed to satisfy him.

"Well, it ain't much ye carry, but I hope it's more than ye've got on ye," he said fervently. "Sure allowin' for its bein' a hot night, 'tis a scandal the way the lot o' ye go round these days."

She wrinkled her nose impudently.

"You been investigatin', flatty?"

He frowned.

"Be ashamed o' yereself," he told her severely.

McCready took heart at the tone and the evident allaying of his suspicions. He decided that the time had come for a bold move.

"Look here," he announced suddenly, "we haven't any more time to waste. Come on."

He took her by the arm and they started. For an instant the patrolman seemed of two minds whether to stop them, but as they pushed forward he stood aside to let them pass.

"Did I do right I'd march ye straight back to yer man. Runnin' off wit' God knows who at four in the mornin'—if ye belonged to me I'd turn ye up and warm ye wit' a stick o' kindlin'."

She flung the answer to that over her shoulder—

"Yeah, an' if I belonged to you, I'd have give you carbolic long ago an' saved you the trouble—or took it myself."

She was defiant enough then, but a

moment later, out of earshot of the officer, he felt her arm quiver under his hand and heard her strangled gasp—

"I thought we was gone then!"

"Oh, Gees if they'd ever have found that stuff in the case!" she added. "An' I've got my gun in the handbag, too."

Her body shook with a long convulsive shudder.

"Oh well," he soothed her, "it's all over now." He added furiously—

"What's the gun got to do with it?"

"Sullivan Law. Oh Gees, I was a dumb fool to bring it."

He remembered now hearing about the Sullivan Law. Seeing the genuineness of her terror, it came to him with renewed force what a position he himself might be in if they should be caught. For a panicky moment he was half minded to pitch Milvey's briefcase with its incriminating contents into some dark entry and give up the hope of ever getting back his papers.

But that was absurd when he had come through so much and was almost at the end of his search. He must be nearing the end of it, he told himself—not, however, with much conviction.

He said, to bolster it up—

"D'you think we're sure to find Milvey where we're going?"

"We'll find him all right."

The encounter with the policeman seemed to have shaken her into silence.

THEY walked a little faster, the click of their feet echoing eerily in the deserted street. The lights were beginning to pale a little now, and the air smelled of the coming of dawn. Once or twice they passed a solitary figure, some workman with his coat slung over his shoulder and a dinner pail. Once a car swept past, leaving a burst of drunken song in its wake.

"Are we going to Gilkey's?"

"Uh-uh—no use goin' there now. Too late. We'll try another place."

"What kind of a place?"

He asked it a little uncertainly. McCready had learned a certain caution about unknown places in the last few hours. She caught his hesitation.

"'S all right—I work there. Sorta night club."

And then, seeing him look down questioningly at his rumpled suit and straighten his tie, she added snappily:

"Oh for cryin' out loud, forget your clo'es. This isn't Longacre Square."

They tramped on without speaking. Only once did McCready break the silence, to ask again whether she knew where Milvey lived or could locate him in case they did not find him where they expected.

"Yeah, I'll find him," she said briefly, and relapsed again into her own thoughts.

That comforted him a good deal. He repeated it to himself and tried to pin his mind to it instead of to the worry that was slowly fastening on him.

They turned from the silent street into a little alley, cobbled underfoot. An all night garage on the corner had a light burning over the door and there was another light in a white globe farther down.

In front of this last, lettered "Magnolia Club," she stopped.

"Right here," she told him and, seeing him hesitate at the foot of a narrow flight of stairs, she added a little impatiently:

"Oh, it's all right this time. I work here—entertainer."

They went up. At the top another of those doors with a sliding panel confronted them, but this time the inspection that followed her knock was cursory. The door opened and they went in.

There was a hallway with a dressing room on each side. Beyond this he saw a long, low ceilinged room, with imitation hewn beams and the lights set in wrought iron sconces.

The place was hazy with stale cigaret smoke and the mingled smells of powder and perfume and bad gin. At the farther end a piano and a violin and a drum pounded out a tired spiritless rhythm as mechanical as a hurdy-gurdy, which half drowned the clatter of dishes and shrill talk and laughter.

In the space cleared for dancing twenty couples circled wearily. Others sat at little tables along the wall and talked and smoked and watched the dancers. A man in a dinner coat slept with his head pillowed on his arms.

McCready looked in vain for the man he had seen on the train.

"I don't believe he's here," he said doubtfully.

"He will be. Come over an' sit down, an' we'll wait for him."

There was nothing else to do. They threaded their way between the tables toward a row of little booths which lined one wall. Several of the people at the tables nodded to the girl as they passed. One man tried to grab her hand and the woman with him laughed shrilly and admonished him—

"Act nice now, dearie."

She seemed to be well known to the patrons of the place.

"You gotta order something," she told him as a waiter bore down on them. "Better try the Scotch. It ain't as bad as a lot you'll get."

HE TOOK her advice. Presently the waiter set two highballs in front of them. He tried his gingerly with some vague idea of knockout drops, but so far as taste went it seemed to be no worse than most. But he noticed that she did not touch hers.

"What's the matter? Something wrong with it?"

"No, I'm kinda off it is all. Drinkin' don't get a girl anything."

He pushed his own glass aside with a sudden caution, and she laughed.

"Takin' no chances, huh? All right, just for once—"

She picked up his glass and took a couple of swallows. She pushed her own over to him.

"I guess you been seein' too many movies. If I wanted you cold I could get it done a whole lot easier than dopin' you. Wanna dance?"

He did not particularly, he was tired. But a habit of courtesy had him half way out of his seat before he remembered the briefcase.

He shook his head and sat down again.

"I'd like to," he told her, "but I'm afraid this thing would cramp my style."

"Oh! Well, it's all right with me. Dancin' isn't any treat in my business. I wish you had the ache I got in my legs this minute."

"You've been working here this evening?"

"I went off at one. I'd just got settled down to knockin' it off good when you come bustin' in. An' then that running through the alley in high heels—"

She looked tired. He said:

"See here, why don't you go along home. I'll give you your seventy-five now—a hundred; you've earned it. I'll know Milvey when I see him."

"Sure?" She looked up at him with a quick interest.

"Why—well, I think so. I only saw him for a short time, of course, and I didn't pay any particular attention to him then, but I think I would. Why don't you?"

She seemed to hesitate, then shook her head wearily.

"No, I'll stick around. I swear I believe you're on the level an' all, but I got my reasons."

She lighted a cigaret and leaned forward, arms on the table, head a little turned, watching him.

"Listen, big boy, this might sound like the bunk to you now after the way I tried to gyp you, but honest, I like you a lot. You been awful decent to me."

McCready flushed. He hardly knew what to answer. He said:

"Oh, I haven't done anything, and it's well worth the hundred to me to find Milvey and get my papers back. I like you, too," he added. "I'd never have got out of that place without your nerve and your quickness."

She leaned towards him.

"Say, listen, what you worried about this Milvey so much for? He's nothin'

but a yegg. What difference does it make to you if he gets that stuff or not?"

"Nothing. It doesn't make any. I'd hand it over to the police except that I've got to have my own briefcase and my papers. Don't you understand? The ship can't sail without them."

"Oh!"

A silence. Then, a little wistfully:

"You're awful crazy about bein' a sailor, aren't you. I wonder—say listen, big boy, how much does it pay you, bein' a sailor an' all?"

There was something disturbing in her nearness now, her dark eyes on his looking sidewise. He said—

"This job I've got now, on the *Tepic* 'll pay eighteen hundred a year."

She looked at him pityingly.

"Eighteen hundred! Eighteen hundred, he says! Why fella, I make more'n that right now, an' I'll do twice as much next season. Zeligman has promised to put me in the Half Moon—that's a swell club offa Times Square. Ah, listen, big boy, what's eighteen hundred an' some old ship that's liable to sink on you any minute? Listen—"

SHE WAS close to his shoulder now, her fingers touching the back of his hand where it clutched his glass.

"Listen, I know where we could get us a swell little apartment, clear away from Milvey an' all that lousy gang—"

He straightened away suddenly, his eyes on hers.

"Say, what are you talking about?"

"Ah, you know, big boy, you know." She had his hand in both of hers now, her fingers twisting between his.

"Listen, you wouldn't have to worry about the rent or anything—not so long as I got my health. Say, listen, I'm goin' to the Half Moon next season and then gimme another year an' I'll be knockin' 'em outa their seats. You do'wanna go back on some old ship—sure you don't. Ah, fella, I could be crazy about you."

He felt the red creep up from his collar to the tips of his ears. The thing was insane, impossible. He must be making some mistake. He must be misunderstanding her somehow. But she had said "apartment" and her shoulder was pressed against his arm and her eyes were smiling at him, sidelong, under their long lashes.

"Couldn't you like me? A little bit?"

He was conscious that this was absurd, this agony of embarrassment, but he could not help it, could not look at her.

"Look here," he said. "Look here, you don't mean that. D'you think I'd let you *keep* me?"

He checked himself, suddenly troubled at the brutality of his own phrase. But she apparently saw nothing out of the way in it.

"Why not? There's plenty do. An' anyhow," she added swiftly, seeing his face darken, "it wouldn't be the same. Ain't you givin' me a pendant, worth heaven knows how much? That wouldn't be like me keepin' you, big boy—I swear it wouldn't."

Suddenly then he has the key to it—the pendant. Curiously, he felt a sense of relief. For a moment he had almost thought it was himself. This made it seem less personal and yet it pricked his vanity.

He forced a smile.

"You're a clever kid!" That seemed the best way to take it. "Nearly had me going for a minute. I don't blame you. It is a pretty thing."

He had left an opening for the sake of her pride, but she refused to see it.

"Ah, you know it ain't that. Listen, I ain't stringin' you; I could be awful crazy about you, no kiddin'. Gee, there's somethin' about a sailor—"

"And about diamonds and rubies and emeralds or wharever they are."

He smiled. He was not going to let the discussion get back on a personal basis.

"Ah, fella! Listen, if you don't believe me you can take an' sell it—if you'll let me wear it just a *little* while first. Ah,

whadda you care about some old ship—"

She snuggled the warm softness of her shoulder under his arm. He felt her fingers fondling his hand, softly.

"Ah, big boy—"

He stirred uneasily, moved away from her a little. He drew his hand away and then patted hers where it lay limp on the table.

"This isn't finding Milvey," he reminded her, trying not to make it sound too matter of fact.

"Whadda you care? Gee, you're awful strong, fella. I can feel the muscle."

"Be a good girl and find him for me. I've got to get my papers."

He felt her hand tighten under his.

"Damn Milvey, an' you too!" she flared suddenly. "Oh gee, I don't mean that."

She passed her hand across her eyes. "I'm so tired I don't know what I'm sayin'."

She looked very young, very pitiful. He hardened himself.

"The quicker we find Milvey the quicker you can get home to bed. Go on now, like a good girl."

The dancing had stopped for the moment. A tired sounding entertainer was whining out the words of a song.

"We'll have a blue room . . .

She hummed a bar or two, her eyes on his, questioning. He shook his head, wearily, stubbornly.

"Run along."

She sighed.

"Ah, gee, you're hard boiled. Well, I did my best for you, didn't I? You can't blame a girl for tryin'."

She got to her feet, shrugged her slim shoulders.

"All right, I'll take a look around. But don't forget, I did my best for you."

There was something cryptic in that, in the way she walked off, still humming, her shoulders swaying a little to the rhythm. It seemed to him that the glance she gave him in passing had something of pity in it—and something of warning.

CHAPTER VII

ENTER MILVEY'S PARTNER

HE WAITED with a queer sense of something impending. Once, in sudden panic, he unfastened the straps of the briefcase and thrust his hand in, feeling frantically through the mess of Milvey's clothes and the burglar's kit until his fingers touched the softness of the black velvet that wrapped the pendant.

It was still there. He felt it gingerly and relaxed. He did not see how she could have got it, but he had heard things—clever tricks of pickpockets—and she had wanted it so. He slid the case behind him where he could feel it between himself and the wall of the booth.

The crowd was thinning out a little by now. Waiters were yawning. But the music still hammered away mechanically and the couples circled the dance floor with weary determination.

She came back as suddenly as she had gone. Behind her was a man, and—McCready's heart sank—it was not the man who had sat next him in the train.

He got to his feet.

"But you're not Milvey!"

A look passed between the girl and the newcomer. He smiled with a broad display of gold teeth.

"Certainly not," he admitted quickly. "O' course not. I'm his partner. Vicks is the name—Julius Vicks—an' I'm certainly glad to meetcha Mister—"

"McCready," he supplied. He was far from taken with Mr. Julius Vicks, he decided—a sleek, sallow young man with nervous hands, who looked as if his name might recently have been Vichnowski or something of the sort. But at least this was a lead. Finding Milvey's partner was probably the next best thing to finding Milvey himself.

Meanwhile Vicks sat down. The girl followed his example and, somewhat unwillingly, McCready slid in beside her. What he wanted now was to get his briefcase without delay and get it to the hotel.

"It's a piece o' luck," Vicks was saying. "I been huntin' you all night."

"Y'see," he went on with an explanatory gesture, "just after Jim called you at the hotel an' ast you to meet him at Pete's, he got a sudden call—call outa town, see? His old mother, see, she's sick, clear over to Newark. So he hadda go. Well, he didn't have no time to get down to Pete's or to leave a message for you even. So he thinks, 'That fella'll think I'm a bum if he don't get no message.' An' besides, he wanted his own case back, see."

McCready nodded.

"I should think he would."

"Sure, why wouldn't he? But he ain't got no time to leave a message, see, so he leaves your case up to our place with a note for me an' highballs it over to Newark where his old mother's layin' sick. Well that's all right, only I don't come in early like he expected. What happens, I'm detained on business. Detained on business, see, an' I don't get there till maybe an hour ago. Well, what I do, I grab the case an' chase over to Pete's. But the place is locked up—everybody gone."

He made a gesture with both hands that said that everybody was gone.

"Naturally you'd have a right to be sore," he added. "Only that's how it was—his old mother's layin' sick over to Newark, see?'"

"That's all right," McCready told him hastily. At the moment he could have forgiven anybody anything in his relief at having the thing settled.

"Got my case with you?" he wanted to know.

Vicks shook his head.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "Y'see, after I found Pete's locked up, I quit. Wasn't a bit of use huntin' you when I didn't know your name even, or where you was liable to be. If it wasn't for Doris, here, I wouldn't never have found you at all. Piece of luck, I'll say."

"It is," McCready agreed warmly. "I'm certainly grateful for it. Did you leave the case up in your room?"

"Yeah, it's there. We'll go get it, soon as you're ready."

McCready was eager, but in spite of his hurry a certain caution stepped in. There were one or two things that puzzled him.

"Didn't Milvey tell you my name?" he wanted to know. "How did he expect you to find me at Pete's then?"

"Musta forgot. Prob'ly figured you'd be askin' for him an' I could find you that way. Or maybe he just forgot."

"But he knew my name—called me up at the hotel. How do you suppose he found that out?"

"Search me. Might have heard you say somethin' about it onna train. Well, what about let's get goin'?"

He got to his feet. The girl followed his example.

McCREADY sat tight. Somewhere there was something queer about this business.

He said deliberately:

"Of course he could have seen the name on my briefcase. Probably that was it."

"Sure—sure it was. I remember I saw it there myself, now you mention it. I don't know why I never thought of that."

McCready knew why. There was no name on his case. He had intended to have it put on when his sister gave it to him, but there had not been time.

Vicks had sat down again. His hands were moving nervously, fingering the ash tray.

"Let's get goin'," he suggested. "My place is just around the block."

McCready looked from him to the girl, who was watching him with a queer, tense light at the back of her dark eyes. He shook his head.

"Suppose you go around and get it." He offered the counter suggestion pleasantly but with a hint of firmness. "Miss—er—Doris and I'll wait for you here.'"

Vicks shot a swift look at the girl. Her hands seemed to be occupied with something in her lap.

"I'm kinda tired," he demurred. "Had

a busy day, see? I don'wanna bother to come alla way back here, 'f it's jussa same to you. What's the matter with you walkin' round with me? How 'bout it, Doris?"

"Suit's me." Her hands were still busy in her lap.

"I got a kinda headache," she added. "The air'll do me good. Come on, big boy, an' don't forget the hundred you're gonna owe me."

She stood up. She would have moved out, but McCready still blocked the way.

"I'd rather not," he decided; and to Vicks he said, "If it's just around the corner it won't take you a minute. We'll be right here. I don't want to seem disobliging, but I've had a lot of trouble over this thing already, and I don't feel like like moving."

Vicks frowned.

"You don'wanna get high hat about it," he warned. "After all, it's yours an' Milvey's lookout, not mine. An' anyway," he added, "this place'll be closed before I can get back. Listen, we don'wanna miss each other again, do we?"

"There'll be time if you hurry."

"Ah, what's the matter with ya?" Vicks demanded unpleasantly.

The girl cut in with:

"Listen, big boy, he's all right; I know him. An' listen, you can hang on to the case all the way. You don't need to let go of it one second till he hands you your own with your old papers."

"Or until your friend finds a good dark place to sock me on the head," McCready amended pleasantly. "Oh, forget it! He's no more Milvey's partner than I am and he hasn't the faintest idea where my briefcase is. Isn't that so?"

Vicks half rose.

"You callin' me a liar?"

"You can prove you're not one by getting that case and bringing it back here."

For a moment they were silent, McCready smiling with a sort of hard triumph, Vicks lowering and angry. Then the girl relaxed with a little sigh.

"Gee you're stubborn," she said unhappily. "Well, you would have it!"

McCREADY, turning with a look of puzzlement, saw Vick's hand slide under the table. Even before the man spoke, he knew what had happened—knew it with a sudden constriction at the pit of his stomach and a crawling at the back of his neck.

"Still!" Vicks said quietly. "Perfectly still. I've got you covered."

McCready felt his hands and feet grow suddenly cold.

"You would have it," the girl was saying again, plaintively. "I tried to fix everything nice, but you ast for it."

He stared at her and at Vicks, who watched him steadily with narrowed eyes.

He stared at her and at Vicks, who watched his steadily with narrowed eyes. He laughed. He had never felt less like laughing, but somehow he managed it.

"Oh, all right—all right," Vicks said. "Have your fun. But you're gonna hand over that case jussa same, see? An' the six hundred fish you took outa Pete's place, too. Oh, sure, I know all about that, an' you're gonna hand it over—don't worry."

"What makes you think so?"

"This." He clicked the pistol in his hand against the bottom of the table.

"Better come through without no argument, fella."

McCready's jaw hardened. Mechanically his fingers went to the little lump on the side of it. The tiny lines about his eyes, put there by much staring through the sun glare across the water, etched themselves deeper. This was something he understood—dealing with a man. He was wondering what the chances were that the whole thing was pure bluff.

"Try and make me," he said, and leaned back heavily against the briefcase, tucked between himself and the wall of the booth.

Vick's thin lips compressed.

"We'll make ye all right," he told him. "This rod throws a steel jacketed bullet that'll rip through your guts like they wasn't there, an' I got it within a coupla feet of your belly."

There was a quiet deadliness about the way he said it that was disturbing.

Out of the corner of his eye McCready watched a waiter skate across the floor with a bottle of ginger ale for a table across the room, saw the man bring out his flask. Couples slid by on the dance floor, not five feet away. The orchestra brayed and pounded, industriously, mechanically.

"Don't talk like a fool," he said. "You can't get away with anything like that in a crowded restaurant like this."

"Can't, huh? Listen, fella, I don'wanna knock y' off if I can help it—that's true. Better to have everything nice, see? But don't get no idea that I won't if it comes to that."

Somehow McCready knew that he meant it. But he said:

"With fifty witnesses? Tell me another."

He glanced swiftly across the room. People talking. People laughing—dancing. It just was not sane, sitting here talking about his own murder with the lights on and the gay crowd so close that he could have been heard by raising his voice a little. He wondered whether it could be true, if he could be going a little mad.

But Vicks was saying:

"Witnesses? Yeah, whose? Listen, fella, this is my regular hangout. There ain't a dozen of 'em in here tonight I don't know. If I ever was caught up with, which I won't, I can get any kind o' testimony I need outa this gang."

Vicks tapped the table impatiently with the muzzle of the pistol, and the girl said to McCready:

"You're stubborn. Don't be a damn' fool—please!"

He glanced at her. What he saw did more to shake his nerve than anything the man had said. Her hands were on the table now, fingers twisted together, and her dark eyes were wide with a very real apprehension.

"Please!" she said again with a disquieting tremor in her voice. "Oh, I wish you'd act reasonable."

His collar felt tight and he knew there were beads of sweat on his forehead.

"WHAT kind of a defense do you think you could put up for shooting a man in cold blood?" he demanded desperately.

"Best inna world." Vicks smiled a little, but his stare was unwavering. "They won't come up with me, but if they did, they couldn't get no first degree, see? It'd be self-defense."

McCready felt a certain confidence flow back into him. That sounded more like a bluff. He laughed jeeringly.

"You'd get a long way with that, wouldn't you? Why I haven't even got a gun."

Again Vicks smiled, a slow smile, disconcerting.

"Zat so?" He jerked his head. "Y'all wet on 'at, fella. Feel in your side pocket—careful."

Slowly McCready's hand crept to his side pocket. But there was hardly need. Somehow, before his fingers touched the smooth metal he knew what he would find. He remembered now—the little nickel plated revolver. She must have reloaded it while she was dressing—or maybe it was not loaded. It did not matter. He remembered her hands at work under the table all the time he was congratulating himself on his cleverness in seeing through Vick's pretense of having his briefcase. She had slipped it into his pocket, of course, while Vicks kept him interested.

His fingers closed on the butt, mechanically. Vicks said sharply—

"Leave it there!"

The lights were swimming before his eyes now, and the crowd was miles away. He seemed to be set off from them, on a different plane.

He heard the girl's plaint—almost a wail.

"I tried everything I could. I wanted everything nice, but you hadda go an' be stubborn—"

Vicks was saying:

"You had a gun. You got rough with

Doris here, an' when I tried to butt in to protect her you went to it. I got there first, is all. That's my story, an' Doris'll swear to it—an' anybody else I need. You won't do no swearin' where I'll put ya."

The girl leaned forward, eyes pleading, lips a little parted.

"Please—*please*, big boy! I wasn't kiddin' when I said I liked you a lot—honest!" There was a tremor of hysteria in her voice. "But I *gotta* have that thing—you ain't got a prayer."

Very carefully, avoiding any sudden move, McCready pushed his weight back against the briefcase. He did not know just why he did it. It was instinctive.

Vicks was watching him steadily. The girl was watching. Maybe if he brought his knees up, hard, there would be a chance of knocking the pistol out of the man's hand, or pinning it to the bottom of the table.

A sort of drab, hopeless sanity came over him. There was not one chance in a million. They had him. And suppose by some miracle he did get away with it? Suppose everything worked out as perfectly as a proposition in geometry? What good was the briefcase to him now? He had no idea where to find Milvey; the *Tepic's* papers were gone anyway, probably for good. Nothing to do with the pendant now but turn it over to the police. It was hardly worth being shot for that.

"Listen," Vicks was saying sharply, "a hundred fish is a big price for knockin' off a guy in this man's town. You got six hundred on ya besides what's in the case. Make up y' mind because we haven't got all night."

"Oh, please, big boy! *Please* act nice!"

Better to give it up, he thought. No use being shot just for the sake of stubbornness. He drew a long breath.

"Well?"

"Well—" slowly. His glance roved desperately over the lighted room. "I suppose, if I've got to—"

"Make up y'mind, fella!"

HE HEARD the words, but his attention was riveted on a woman's face at one of the tables. Her eyes were wide, staring toward the door, and her mouth hung open. As he looked the color drained away under her makeup, leaving it a spotty gray.

There was a quick commotion at the far end of the room, a babel of protest, the scrape of chairs, a sudden, tense hush. In the silence a girl's voice said, "—'an I laundry them myself in—' ", ending with a frightened gasp. It flashed through McCready's mind that it was like a moving picture when the film has stopped short.

A man had come out on the entrance to the dance floor, a young man, slim and graceful in a dinner jacket with a straw hat tipped on the back of his head. In each hand he held an automatic pistol.

Some woman screamed, a shrill little *yip* cut off in the middle. Vicks jerked his head around sharply.

At the same instant McCready came to himself and drove his knees up under the table with all his force.

There was an exclamation from Vicks—a clatter as his pistol dropped to the floor. One of those in the hands of the newcomer swung down to cover them.

"Quiet!" he said. "Everybody quiet please!"

Vicks seemed to be frozen. McCready was rigid with a queer paralysis of mind and body. Terror was flowing in waves over the room now, terror that could be felt like a physical thing.

It seemed ages before anything happened. When it did it happened with ghastly suddenness.

The man with the pistols gestured with one of them toward a table—the table where the woman sat whose panic had first warned McCready of what was going on.

He said—

"Come out of that, you rat, an' get yours!"

McCready watched the man with a sort of horrid fascination. His face was

purple and the veins stood out on his forehead. He stared glassily at the man with the pistols and got to his feet, stiffly, like a mechanical doll.

At that instant the woman screamed and threw herself across him. The man reached for his pocket—whirled half round as though struck by an unseen club—coughed—slid quietly to the floor.

McCready was not conscious of having heard the shot. But the victim lay face down in a queer limp huddle, and the pistol in the right hand of the killer was smoking.

"That's all," the latter said, quietly, but with an edge in his tone. "Perfectly quiet everybody — perfectly still, please—"

He was backing toward the door now, the pistols held steady—he had passed down the lane of tables—had disappeared. The sound of deep breaths being drawn in unison passed over the room like a wave.

AT THAT moment the lights went out and panic broke loose.

Screams, oaths, the shriek of chairs suddenly thrust back, a clatter of feet as the crowd plunged toward the door in the dark—a stentorian voice:

"Keep your seats, please! Keep your seats, ladies and gentlemen. *Damn you, siddown!*"

McCready came to life suddenly.

He felt swiftly under the table with his foot, found the pistol Vicks had dropped, and kicked it somewhere out into the middle of the floor. At the same instant he seized the briefcase and slid out of the booth. Somebody, Vicks he supposed, gripped him around the neck. He managed to get hold of one of his fingers and bend it back. There was a cry of pain and the grip relaxed.

Then he was fighting through the mob, the briefcase in his hand, toward a window at the opposite end from the door, reasoning shrewdly, if hastily, that the two would probably look for him to join the stampede in the other direction. Somehow he was neither horrified nor elated nor even excited now—just very tired and filled with a stale sort of determination.

"Siddown!" some one was shouting behind him. "Siddown everybody!"

He knew, without knowing how he knew it, that there would be a fire escape outside the window—or rather, it never occurred to him that there would not be one.

He slipped through the last of the crowd, felt his way around the scattered orchestra instruments, nearly putting his foot through the bass drum in the process, and reached the window where a slit of gray light showed between heavy curtains.

The confusion was beginning to settle down a little now, but farther down the room he could still hear excited voices and bumpings and thrashings as the crowd milled toward the entrance in the dark.

Then the lights came on, as suddenly as they had gone off. McCready, one foot on the window sill, shot a quick glance over his shoulder. The room was a wreck, tables overturned, chairs smashed, while at the farther end a crush of people were jammed in the narrow doorway.

One look was enough. The next moment he had parted the curtains and stepped out into a gray dawn.

He found himself on a narrow iron platform. One story below was what seemed to be a small roof garden, with window boxes, shrubs in pots, a couple of rattan chairs and an awning. From where he was, he looked in vain for any way to get down from there to the street below.

He thought swiftly. Vicks, the girl—somebody—might easily have seen him outlined against the gray sky as he stepped out of the window. Probably the best thing to do now would be to go up—at any rate a pursuer would be less likely to look for him above—wait until things had quieted down, and then come down again. There must be some way down

from the roof garden to the street, he thought, without going inside the house. Or very possibly, once on the roof, not very far above, he might find some other way down.

As quietly as possible he began to climb, and in less than a minute he had drawn himself over the stone parapet to the roof of the building which housed the Magnolia Club.

It was the ordinary flat gravel roof which he had reached, with a waist high coping and a sky light in the middle. A moment's investigation showed him that this was locked—a disappointment, as he had hoped that he could come down inside the building instead of by the fire escape. It was rapidly getting lighter now, the east was already brilliant with the promise of sunrise and the lights of the city had paled, and a man climbing down the side of the building might attract unwelcome attention.

However, there was nothing else for it. He looked around to see whether he could find some other escape than the one by which he had come, and which would of necessity lead him past the window of the Magnolia Club, but there seemed to be none.

He would have to go down as he had come up, he decided, and take the chance that there would be some way to get down from the roof garden below. Probably it was not important anyway. Unless Vicks had happened to see him leave, Vicks would almost certainly conclude that he had got out by the door in the dark with the rest of the crowd.

He decided to give him five minutes and then go down.

HE WAITED, watch in hand, while the glow in the east deepened above the roofs and the air stirred lightly with the coming day. Sounds were beginning to come up to him from the streets now—the rattle of a surface car, the racing of an automobile engine, faint and far away but clear in the stillness.

At the end of five minutes he snapped his watch shut and peered cautiously down over the edge at the awnings and greenery below. It would not be safe to wait any longer, he decided. People were beginning to be abroad on the streets and he had no desire to be taken for a second story man with a kit of burglar's tools and a stolen pendant in his briefcase.

He let himself over the edge, gingerly, and began the climb down.

At the window of the Magnolia Club he paused, listening. There were voices inside and once he heard a heavy tread across the polished dance floor. He could not make out what they were saying. It might very probably be the police, he thought, and it occurred to him that perhaps the best thing to do would be to go in, tell his story right now, and hand them the briefcase.

In the end he decided against it. It would look more than a little suspicious his coming in at this juncture off the fire escape, and besides, he might be taken to the police station and held as a witness to the murder. He had to be aboard the *Tepic* in Hoboken by noon. It was bad enough to have lost her papers without compounding matters by being late.

He went on. If worst came to worst and there was no fire escape from the roof below, he could knock on a window and try to explain matters to the people who lived there, or even climb up to the Magnolia Club again.

He had reached the last rung and had one foot on the gravel of the roof when something prodded him in the middle of the back and Vick's voice said:

"Keep 'em up—way up! Well, here we are again."

His hands were still grasping the ladder above his head, one of them at the same time holding the handle of the briefcase. He obeyed instructions and kept them there. At the same time he turned his head slowly around.

Vicks grinned.

"Regular human fly, aintcha?" he remarked. "First you go way on up, an' than you come way on down."

"You saw me go out the window?"

"Sure," Vicks was saying. "An' I saw you go up onna roof. I knew you'd have to come down this way if you come at all. Gees, you took a swell time about it."

"Where's Doris?"

McCready was still clinging uncomfortably to the iron rung above his head. Why he was asking the questions he could hardly have told himself. It was some vague idea of playing for time.

"Here I am, big boy," her voice answered, and by craning his neck he saw her, perched on the arm of one of the rattan chairs, well under the awning and out of sight from above.

"You might as well be reasonable," she added. "You can't get away with anything this time."

Vicks prodded him again with what he supposed was the muzzle of a pistol.

"I'll say you can't," he agreed. "Not this time."

To McCready himself it seemed that at last he was fairly caught.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked wearily.

"Nothin' much. Just unhook your hand from the handle of that case an' let it drop. Do it careful, an' you'll live to be hit by an automobile."

McCready hesitated, but not for long. The muzzle of the pistol was prodding him too insistently to admit of delay. He obeyed instructions, very carefully, and the case flopped on to the gravel by his foot.

VICKS stooped swiftly. At the same instant, McCready swung himself around and dropped on to him.

The thing was so unexpected that the man underneath, his attention taken up with the briefcase, had no time to dodge. The two went down in a heap.

There was a moment of tangled thrashing while gravel flew and they grunted and gasped. Then Vicks got his gun hand loose.

McCready saw that just in time. He jerked his leg around and planted a kick on the wrist that held it. The pistol flew half way across the little garden. Out of the tail of his eye he saw the girl pounce on it, but there was no time to worry about that now. He had his thumbs against the man's windpipe and was savagely doing his best to throttle him.

Then he looked up and saw her. She was standing by the rattan chair under the awning, very white with her dark eyes wide, holding the pistol pointed at his head.

"Leggo!" she said. "I'll shoot!"

He relaxed his hold a little on Vicks, who was flopping like a fish.

"Go ahead and shoot," he told her, and as he spoke he saw that Vicks was lying on the briefcase.

"I will," she insisted.

"Go ahead."

"U-u-urk!" came from the prostrate Vicks.

She hesitated, wavered.

"Well anyhow I'll sock you on the back of the head with it."

She moved toward him purposefully.

From overhead a voice bawled—

"Hey, what's goin' on there?"

The girl stopped short and retreated farther back under the awning. McCready twisted his neck, still keeping his hold of the other man's throat, and stared up.

From the window of the Magnolia Club, fifteen feet above, protruded the head and shoulders of a policeman.

McCready gave a gasp of relief and let go. Vicks scrambled to his feet, feeling his neck. The policeman's gun covered both impartially.

"What's it all about?" he demanded.

"This man's trying to rob me," McCready explained.

"Humph! It looks more like you were tryin' to murder him."

He gestured with the pistol.

"Come on up here, the two of you," he directed. "An' no funny business, mind."

Vicks was trying to say something, but all that came from him was a strangled squeak. McCready shot a quick warning look at the girl. Why did he not give her away now that he had the chance?

Evidently she had fully expected him to, for she had retreated as far as possible under the cover of the awning and her look of dumbfounded amazement changed swiftly to one of gratitude. He saw her lips move and her whisper just reached him—

"Ah, fella, I could be crazy about you—no kiddin'."

Above, the policeman was becoming peremptory.

"Come on there—snap into it!" emphasized with a rap of his free hand on the window sill.

McCready picked up the briefcase and, with Vicks in the lead, moved up to the ladder.

"One at a time now—you first." He motioned at Vicks.

McCready called up:

"That's all right, but hold him when you get him there. He's been trying to rob me."

"We'll hold him all right—an' you too. Step along there."

Vicks went up and disappeared. McCready followed.

They had cleaned up the worst of the mess. The tables and chairs had been hastily straightened. The body still lay huddled where it had fallen, and a little group, some in the uniform of the police and some in plain clothes, clustered around it. A patrolman had taken Vicks in charge and another stepped up alongside of McCready as soon as he entered.

A plain clothes man walked over from the group around the body.

"Well, what's it all about?" he demanded.

Vicks made a series of strangled sounds.

"He was trying—" McCready began.

"Shut up! I'm askin' him. Now! Talk up."

This time Vicks did better. With one hand on his throat he pointed to McCready.

"Thassa man did the shootin'!" he managed to croak. "I caught him."

The plain clothes man wheeled on McCready and subjected him to a long stare.

"Huh? What you got to say to that?"

McCREADY, who had been too astonished to protest, found his voice.

"Only that he's a liar. I never saw the man in my life until tonight. I saw him shot—that's all I know. This man has been trying to rob me. He was trying it when the officer there saw us."

The plain clothes man frowned.

"Well, you got to say something," he remarked. He turned to one of the policemen.

"Fan 'em."

A quick, businesslike search of Vick's pockets revealed nothing of any interest. McCready's produced the girl's nickle-plaited revolver.

The detective's eyes lighted on it.

"That what you shot him with? Humph—empty and clean. Well, it's enough to hold you on anyhow. Sullivan Law. We'll see what you know about this killing later."

"Look here!" McCready said. "That thing was planted on me. I didn't have anything to do with the shooting."

"Well, everybody got their own opinion as to that. If you didn't do it, whaddya go out the winda for?"

"This fellow here was trying to rob me of this." He held up the briefcase.

"That's your story, huh? What's in it?"

McCready hesitated. Then, realizing that concealment would be hopeless—

"A set of burglar's tools and a jeweled pendant."

The detective stared.

"Well, that's plenty!" he announced. "Take him on down to the station."

"I'll drop in later and give my evidence," said Vicks.

The plain-clothes man smiled grimly.

"No you won't," he said. "You'll go right along now—same wagon. There's somethin' funny about this an' you know as much as anybody. Take 'em away."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAW TAKES A HAND

"NOW ABOUT this murder charge—" the square jawed man behind the high desk fingered his short gray mustache and frowned—" that's out. We know about that, of course. Ritzy Gleason did the shooting. The fella give him a rubber check in some booze deal a coupla months ago. What we want to know about is this Sullivan you pulled. You claim it's a plant. What about it?"

"And watch your step," he warned as McCready opened his mouth. "You got a gun and a second story worker's kit and a piece of ice that belongs to some society woman out in Buffalo. Now that don't look so good. Maybe you can square it, and maybe you can't. But if you're on the level, the straighter you tell it, the quicker you'll find yourself on the outside looking in. Just telling you, you understand. Now go ahead."

After the tangle of accusation and counter accusation through which he had gone during the past fifteen minutes, the questions shot at him suddenly and answered without time to think, all the varied paraphernalia of crime detection, very bewildering and decidedly fearsome to the average citizen who happens to become involved in it, this forthright, impartial invitation to tell his story was like a glass of cold water to a thirsty man. McCready seized on it eagerly.

Once or twice during his recital of the adventures that had finally brought him here, the man behind the desk interjected some question—notably when he spoke of the mysterious Milvey by name.

"What time was it he called you up?"

"A little after ten."

"Sure of that?"

"Yes, sir."

The man behind the desk wrote something on a slip of paper, punched a button, and handed the note to a uniformed policeman who answered the call.

"All right—go on."

McCready did. He told about his winnings in Pete's place and his escape.

"Well, go on."

He hesitated.

"There was a girl—I wouldn't want to get her into any trouble. She hasn't done anything, really."

"Listen, son." The older man's tone had dropped its curtness. It was almost fatherly.

"You don't have to tell me any more or any less than you want to. What I'm trying to do is to get you straightened out—if you're shooting square with me. Now as to this girl, there won't be any charge unless you make it. If you don't want to tell her name, you needn't. We can find that out in half an hour anyway if we want to. If I was you, I'd go on and tell the whole thing as it happened. She tried to get the ice away from you, didn't she? Yeah, I thought so. Well, when you've seen as much of these birds as I have—but go ahead. It don't matter."

"Thanks," McCready told him gratefully.

He went on to tell of their escape from the building, of Vick's part in the affair, of the shooting and his going out the window and subsequent throttling of Vicks.

As he finished a policeman came in and laid a slip of paper before the man at the desk. The latter scanned it and nodded.

"I guess we owe you an apology, Mister McCready," he said. "Everything checks. We've got the record of Milvey's telephone call to you at the Magoon—10:15—and the Yellow Line people vouch for you."

"Oh, it's all right," he explained hastily, seeing McCready's look of concern. "We didn't tell 'em you were in jail. Said you wanted to start a charge account or something. We could check up the taxi that you chased Milvey in, but I guess we won't bother."

"Then I can go?"

"Well, not quite yet. One more thing to be done."

He punched a button and looked mysterious. As if he had summoned a familiar spirit, the door opened and the policeman reappeared.

With him was a man, and—McCready's heart skipped a beat—it was the man whom he had pursued with such little success in the Grand Central Station.

"Know him?"

"I should say I do. That's the man that had my briefcase.'

"You take his briefcase?" the man at the desk asked Milvey.

The latter shook his head.

"Never seen him before," he asserted. "Never seen his briefcase."

"Didn't call him up at the Magoon, I suppose?"

"Nuh—must'a' been somebody else."

"Couple of other fellows, huh? All right, take him out."

He turned to McCready.

"A little surprise for you." He drew out a brown briefcase from behind the desk. "Try your key on that."

Joyously McCready fell on it. It opened to his key to disclose the *Tepic's* papers, all in order.

"You fell into a plant," the other was explaining. "This Milvey had a tip we were on to him for that job in Buffalo. He switched cases with you on the train and figured on calling you up later and getting his own back. It worked all right that far, but what he had not figured on was that we'd get him before he could get up to Pete's place. That's a tough dive, by the way. Better let those places alone. We didn't find the goods on him, of course, but we held him on suspicion of having stolen your case. Made him pretty sore, too. He's a high class crook and don't like to be accused of little jobs like that. Hurt his pride."

"But how did he get my name and address?" McCready asked the question that had puzzled him at intervals all night.

"Got it when you gave it to the Westcott Express man. That's an old one. Lots of 'em use it. Well, good luck to you. Next time you're in a jam come to us in the first place."

McCREADY stood on the sidewalk in front of the police station, the briefcase with the *Tepic's* papers clutched in his hand. His breath came quicker than usual and his fingers strayed to the little lump on the side of his jaw that always got hard when he was excited.

Third mate of the *Tepic* at twenty-two. Five hours to see New York. Let's see, a bath and a shave—breakfast—and then the Woolworth Building, Grant's Tomb, the Aquarium . . .

The DOMADOR DOES HIS STUFF

By

EDGAR YOUNG

ON ALL sides of the adobe ranch house and sprawling outbuildings the pampa stretched away for miles, flat as a floor and dotted with bunches of tough pampa grass. Here and there were clusters of cattle, seeking the scant shade cast by the dwarf willows along the *esteros*. Peering closely one could see a browsing guanaco or a meandering ostrich almost blending with the brown of the grass and pampa; peering more closely still, a puma slipping from bunch to bunch of grass to draw nearer a straying calf or an unwary guanaco.

Outside the corral palisade at the rear of the red roofed white *chacra*, three *gauchos* squatted in the shade beside a tiny fire upon which rested a tin kettle in which water was boiling. Nearby three horses with heads down and sides heaving stood resting from the gallop across the pampa. The *gauchos* were preparing to take the inevitable *maté* before proceeding with the work in hand.

Steam burst from the spout of the kettle. One of the *gauchos* flung a pinch of the powdered herb into a tiny gourd that was shaped like a goose's egg. Holding it, he gingerly filled it with boiling water. He inserted a nickel tube the size of a pipe stem and sucked upon it noisily, allowing the intake of air to cool the boiling tea. It was more like smoking tea than drinking it, for the quantity he took was small. He handed it along. The second *gaucho* sucked gurglingly, cleared his throat and passed gourd and tube to the third. The owner emptied it, filled it again with water and repassed it. It was nine in the morning and this was the third *maté* of the day. They stood up and looked around.

Don Timoteo was shuffling out from the ranch house toward them, his straw house slippers flopping. Behind him came two young North Americans dressed in baggy riding clothes and shining leggings, grinning from beneath their stiff brimmed Stetson hats. Old Timoteo was bareheaded, and his iron gray hair hung to his shoulders. The *gauchos* saw them coming, and stood up.

The Americans stared closely at the three *gauchos*, who had colored woolen shawls about their shoulders; whose trousers were other shawls or ponchos wrapped about their waists and tucked between their legs, forming baggy breeches of a sort that came down to the knees. Below this their fringed drawers legs extended until they entered the legs of the wrinkly sole-less, heel-less *potro* boots. These had been made from the skin of a mare's legs,

allowed to form to the foot and leg, and then scraped and tanned with brains rubbed into them with the hands. Buckled to these yellow boots were great spurs of brass, with rowells six inches in diameter. The *gauchos* slightly tiptoed as they stood to allow the wheels to clear the ground. The three were hatless, and their long black hair was bound about their foreheads with colored ribbons.

The ranch hands were wandering out from the outbuildings and ranging themselves along the other side of the corral. The troop of colts were wheeling and dashing about within it in a great state of alarm. Faces of women had appeared at the upper windows of the ranch house and were waiting for the *domador* to begin. The *domador* was the tallest of the three *gauchos*. He was thin, wiry, and wore a long, drooping, black mustache. The two others were assistants to the breaker. They nodded in answer to the rancher's wave of the hand.

They now got ready to start. They threw off their ponchos from their shoulders and brought into view pink, yellow and blue shirts, full of body and baggy of sleeve. They tightened their belts a notch. Crosswise in the belts were thrust the long curved knives.

The *domador* picked up his rawhide lariat and stepped briskly to the corral gate with the two attendants close at his heels. He opened it slightly and stepped within.

THE colts dashed to the other side of the enclosure, snorting and rearing. The *domador* glanced here and there disdainfully. The lasso was thrown carelessly over his arm. The keen eyes, the thin hooked nose, the long black hair with the fillet about the forehead, the bulging blue poncho about the waist, the thin legs below, and the tiptoeing step as he advanced to the center of the corral gave him a peculiar appearance. He was like a tall, tense eagle.

He waved the lariat as his eyes ran over the colts, seeking the most fearless. The corner of his eye caught the staring eyes of the rancher, his two friends gaping between the palings. On the other side, pairs of eyes and dabs of color showed the ranch hands, watching expectantly.

A yellow colt, with white mane and tail flowing, dashed by. It lost itself in a milling group. For an instant the yellow head lifted and the colt snorted. With a flip of the arm, the *domador* threw the thin rawhide. Thirty feet away the loop dropped about the neck of the yellow colt. The young stallion lunged high into the air, and the other horses sprang away on either side.

The horse fought backward. The *domador* crouched forward, playing his end of the rope down near the ground. The colt gave a great lunge and dashed across the inclosure. The breaker gave him a bit of rope. He took up the slack with a jerk. Leaping here and there he shortened the tether.

One of the attendants ran to his side. As the horse reared, the attendant's half hitch pinned the two front legs together. The *domador* slacked his rope, and the horse leaped away. The attendant gave a surge on his rope and the horse came to the ground with a thud that sent a cloud of dust upward. The attendant leaped astride the animal's head and seated himself upon it. The other attendant rushed forward and tossed a half hitch around one of the flying hind legs and hobbled it to the diagonal foreleg, yanking tight and securing the legs together. The man seated on the horse's head sprang to his feet. The horse writhed and rolled in an ecstasy of terror, snorting, lashing his free legs, snapping, and whirling his head from side to side. The three men sprang at him, avoiding teeth and feet. They rained kicks upon him. Kicking and punching him, they brought him to his feet.

The *domador* threw his rope over his shoulder and started toward the gate. The running noose about the horse's neck drew tight. The horse fought backward and his eyes protruded. One attendant dropped behind with a long whip and played it about the horse's flanks

while the other ran to the gate. As the *domador* pulled the yellow horse forward, the gate opened. The hobbled animal plunged out, and the *domador* dragged him to the saddling post a few paces away. This is the trunk of a young tree buried four feet in the ground and protruding upward higher than a man's head. A heavy rawhide rope is attached to it permanently.

The *domador* tossed this rope about the horse's neck and sprang to snap the heavy iron hook in the ring. He snatched his lariat free. The horse now leaped, plunged, kicked and bit in a frenzy of fear and rage. The *domador* and his two *gauchos* stepped back. The spectators drew nearer.

THE tamer took out a folded handkerchief from a pocket in his wide belt. Unfolding it and avoiding the flying feet and head of the horse, he flung it about the horse's eyes and knotted it under the throat. The other two men were tossing the cloths on the colt's back and holding them in place. The horse could not see, and they intuitively avoided kicks and bites as he lashed out blindly. The bulky *recado*, a saddle of two stuffed rolls of rawhide, was cinched tightly with a broad belt that went over the saddle and around the horse's belly. A puma skin was tossed on top and cinched with a band of colored cloth. The rawhide bit was shoved between the horse's teeth and the head-stall drawn over his ears. The *domador* leaped into the saddle. The attendants released the hobbles. He snatched off the handkerchief.

With a scream of rage the yellow stallion leaped straight into the air. The *domador's* legs began to rise and fall as he drove in the long spurs. The heavy quirt, fastened to his wrist with a thong, began to flay the horse's rump and flanks. The yellow colt bucked. He sun-fished. He reared and walked on his hind legs. A cloud of dust arose about the fighting horse and rider. Grunts, snorts, drumming of hoofs on the baked pampas.

The plunging horse neared the corral palisade. The two attendants leaped astride their saddled horses and one galloped between the bucking horse and the fence. A long whip was trailing from his hand. It leaped out and the heavy lash smacked about the nose of the struggling yellow colt. With a snort that was a scream of pain, the bucking horse whirled. The whip hissed through the air and found his flank. He plunged upward and outward in a great leap. The whip of the other attendant lashed under his belly. He set off, running. The *domador* slacked the reins.

Level as a floor stretched the pampas. The yellow horse was at the head of a flying wedge, with white mane and tail flying. The two riders-off had coiled their long whips and were using their heavy riding quirts to keep at the side and rear.

Time and again the yellow horse paused to buck and kick, and time and again the quirt and spurs of the *domador* forced him onward. Time and again the long whips were brought into action.

Far out in the pampas the spectators saw the three riders turn. The yellow horse paused a few times to buck, but his efforts grew feeble. He trotted painfully forward toward the corral.

At the saddling post the *domador* sprang off. The broken horse stood with head down. Its nostrils were dilated. Its sides were heaving. Livid wales on rump and shoulders showed where the whips had fallen. There appeared to be a film over its bloodshot eyes. It was unsaddled and unbridled and left tied to the breaking post.

The *domador* went back into the corral. His lasso was thrown lightly over his arm, and he tiptoed foward, looking for the next best horse in the pen. There was a scattering of the colts and much snorting, as his rope shot out. It fell about the neck of a two year old gelding. The breaking process was repeated.

Mares are never broken to the saddle in the Argentine.

KALIHO

A *Story of the Hawaiian Islands*

BACK of the white island beach, changing under the red flush of the morn from the shadows of the night to a broad ribbon of silver, lay the still sleeping palms. Behind them piled dark tiers of fern, fading into a lighter green far up where tropic trees studded the slope to the mountain top, upon the crest of which perched the home of Kaliho.

Around his large thatched bungalow clustered bowers of honeysuckle and *ilima*, fit canopies for the Kauai island princess who, awake with the dawn, was walking with the light step and lithe movement of the upland Hawaiian toward the *guava* bush, from which, in season, she brought her father's breakfast fruit.

The girl was Lehua, and as she went her way singing an old, old melody of Hawaii, Kaliho appeared in the doorway and watched his daughter with pride.

The sound of a horse making its way up the bridle path, sinking its hoofs step by step into the mud of the early morning rain, reached his ears from below. Kaliho peered through the trees, discerning a lone rider astride a pinto. The figure of Dr. Hallows, the Waimea surgeon from

By PAUL NEUMANN

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR:

THIS story is the impulse behind Robert Louis Stevenson's visit of investigation to the Island of Molokai's leper settlement at Kaulapapa. The visit was followed by a brochure attacking the Rev. Dr. Charles Hyde, Congregationalist head of the "missionary" party in Honolulu, who had criticized Father Damien, the Belgian priest, who died a victim of the disease. The story has been known to the author no less than thirty-nine years.

—PAUL NEUMANN

the coast town where the Honolulu steamer called once a week, was familiar to every one in Kauai.

A curt order from Kaliho brought three native retainers tumbling from a second thatched house, at the rear of which half a dozen horses were contentedly grazing. Kaliho addressed the men as Alika, Malihi and Mainapo. In curt Hawaiian he told them to see that such food as the white men affected for their morning meal be prepared—coffee, broiled fish, toast, ripe *guavâs* and mountain apples.

Kaliho was the last of Kauai's *moii*, great chiefs of this most northerly and most beautiful of the Hawaiian islands. His grandfather had escaped the wrath of the great Kamehameha, who united the group under his own benign rule by the simple expedient of hurling over the nearest precipice all who disagreed with him.

And that grandfather had held, secured by deed and registry when the white men came, the sixteen hundred acres spreading away on the plateau behind Kaliho's home. Kaliho's father, no less wise, had done the same, and Kaliho after him. But he had no son to succeed him and had waited in vain for some one of her

own station to pay court to Lehua; some one who would keep the heritage intact, content himself with its product of cattle, hogs and tropic fruit and not convert its splendid beauty into a mere cane field to enrich the mill owners.

True, Dr. Hallows was a frequent and seemingly friendly visitor, but Kaliho mistrusted the surgeon. The old Hawaiian never forgot a memorable visit to Honolulu, where he went to bring Lehua home when she passed out of the seminary. Hallows, as host at a *luau* in honor of Kaliho, had plied the old chief with whisky in an attempt to trick him into signing over his land to the sugar men. The feast had broken up when Kaliho laughed in Hallows' face at the suggestion.

Kaliho did not like Hallows and he was sure Hallows did not like him. Hospitality, however, was the first law of the land, and none should ever say that he had failed to observe custom.

The surgeon and girl met at the threshold of the Kaliho home. He swept his huge Panama from his head and bowed to his horse's mane. Lehua acknowledged the salute with a dazzling smile and extended the tiniest of brown hands.

"Aloha," she said simply. "Welcome, *kauka*."

Without releasing her fingers he threw himself, light as a cat, from the horse and stood facing her.

"My island queen, you are as gracious and lovely as ever," he said, taking in with an admiring glance her graceful carriage and the faultlessly regular features common to the Hawaiian of high caste.

She shrugged her smooth rounded shoulders as she withdrew her hand from his clasp, and set her delicate brows in mock ferocity.

"*Kauka*, you flatter like a newcomer, a *malahini* seeking to expose our vanity," she answered.

Kaliho extended his gnarled hand.

"What brings you here so early? You must have left Waimea in the dark," he said.

"Board of health matter," the doctor said. "I am up to examine some people back of your land. We got a case of *mai pake*, leprosy, there last week. It is not nice to sneak in on these folks and have to send the sufferers away to the living death on Molokai, but duty is duty."

"Duty is duty," the old chief echoed. "Duty, even though your own people did bring in the cursed sickness with their Chinese labor."

Lehua shuddered, but the natural light heartedness of her race quickly asserted itself and with a merry farewell, she turned to run for her favorite horse, behind the retainers' house. Rain or shine, her morning ride and swim were had.

KALIHO and his guest entered the bungalow. The latter, at a sign from his host, seated himself at a *koa* table set in American style. Kaliho sat with him but ate nothing.

"While I am here, Kaliho, I want to ask you again if you will sell your land for plantation purposes. We are planning a railroad up from Nawilili and want to join it with old man Myers' sugar plant. The price is enough to let you and Lehua live in Honolulu in a style worthy of her."

"*Aole*, never," Kaliho answered.

"At all events, don't keep her cooped up here with yourself, Mainapo, Alika and that other boy," Hallows persisted. "Let her come down to Waimea. She can stay at the home of my housekeeper and study the music she loves so much under that San Francisco singer, Hugo Farrand."

The Hawaiian shook his head.

"Lehua's music is that of her own people. It is enough for her and for me," he said.

Hallows remained insistent.

"Kolau of old said that, and he died in the wilds of the old crater of Haleakala, in Maui, alone and starving," he said. "The old days are gone. Even a Hawaiian chief owes it to his daughter to let

her go among the best people. You will not live forever and when you go, what is to become of your daughter unless you give her a chance to develop and make acquaintances? You don't want her thrown away on one of your mountain boys. Let her come. It will be the beginning."

"Of the end," the Hawaiian added.

"What are your conditions? I'll meet them," the surgeon said, desire and annoyance in his voice.

"Marry her here, first," was the curt reply.

"There is no reason to suspect me, Kaliho," the surgeon answered evenly, although for a moment he was startled at the native's intuition. "I would feel flattered to be the husband of Lehua, but I have a wife of my own. She is in Samoa. If I forgot to tell you this before, excuse it as an oversight."

He smiled grimly at the thought of the woman he had left at Apia when he came to the Hawaiian Islands seven years before. Her yellow, parched skin and the acidulated appearance, so common to white women long resident in the South Seas, made in his mind an unpleasant contrast with the alluring, fresh beauty of Lehua.

"They told me that in Honolulu," Kaliho said. "I know it, but Lehua does not. I tried you to see if you would tell me. You are not all blackguard, but you mean me and mine no good. I will send her to her cousins on the Island of Hawaii, where she will be out of your way."

Hallows pushed back his chair.

"It means I am to go?" he queried.

"Yes," the old man said. "Go. Aloha, *kauka*. When you return she will have gone too."

Hallows found Mainapo holding his pinto outside the door. He mounted and without further word rode off to the east.

Arrangements for Lehua's journey to the Island of Hawaii were quickly made. She rode up from the beach an hour after Hallows' departure, her long black tresses falling around her shoulders like the folds of a delicate lace mantilla.

"Come," her father said simply, pointing to the bungalow.

A few words told her everything. Without protest she quietly packed her belongings into two huge leather bags, especially made to fit behind her saddle. With Mainapo leading, she turned her horse toward the north.

In the Bay of Nawiliwili, the faithful little steamer *Mikahala* would be anchored, loading sugar. In her, Lehua would sail to Honolulu, from which port the old Kinau would carry her to Hilo, two hundred miles away.

From the deck, Lehua gazed at her island with melting eyes, in whose languid depths was the sad dream of her race's fate; steadily to fade before the white man, or be merged with his race. Either meant extinction.

She sailed with the next day's sunset.

Kaliho and Mainapo, for the old man had accompanied his girl to the seaport, reached their home at the edge of the plateau at midnight. On the *koa* table lay a note. It was from Hallows.

"Come to Waimea before next week's boat," it read. "I have had to bring in two of your people for transfer to Molokai."

Next day found Kaliho at Hallows' office.

"Can nothing be done?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"What do you want with me?"

"As guardian of these people, I want you to come to the leper receiving station at Honolulu with me and them. You can there help them assign their property to their heirs, because, as you know, the government holds them legally dead when they reach the settlement station at Kaulapapa."

Kaliho's plea to be allowed to see the two men at the jail where they were locked in cells, set apart for the afflicted condemned to the settlement, was refused.

"I have no authority," Hallows said, "and I am only asking you to come to Honolulu because I want to show you I am not as bad as you think I am, and

because it is your duty to your own people to help them at this time."

LATE at night, three days later, another little inter-island steamer sailed from Waimea bay, carrying the two afflicted men locked in a brig forward. The wailing relatives of the doomed Hawaiians were driven by board of health officers from the landing pier, whence a whale boat had taken them out to the vessel.

She landed them at the dock in Honolulu next morning at sunrise. At the receiving station, Hallows signed the commitment papers for the two and beckoned Kaliho to an inner room. The native entered a whitewashed chamber, along three walls of which, ran a bench. Two small windows furnished the light. These were barred.

"Wait here," the surgeon said. "I am going for a notary."

Kaliho sat down. He waited fully half an hour before the door opened and a uniformed attendant glanced in, nodded to him and left. Doors were opening and closing here and there along the hall. Another half hour went by; an hour. Kaliho thought he heard a bolt shoot home. He walked to the door and tried it. It was locked. Leaping on the bench which brought his face level with the cross rod on the bars of one of the windows, he saw two guards watching a score or more of the condemned unfortunates, walking around the walled exercise ground.

"Hey, you," he called. "*Hele mane*— come here."

One of the men turned around and sauntered over. Standing beneath the window he said—

"*Pehea?* What is it?"

"What's the matter here? Where's Doctor Hallows?"

"Gone back to Kauai," was the answer. "Doctor Henning will examine you soon."

"You're *pupuli* — crazy!" Kaliho shouted. "I'm not here to be examined. Come here and let me out."

The guard turned away.

Kaliho hurled himself upon the door.

Outside, a sharp word of command was heard. A bolt shot out from a socket. Kaliho stepped back, ready to leap as quickly as the door opened. As it swung back, he made a dash to break through the three native guards and the white man standing outside. They threw him back. The natives seized him; stripped his clothes from him. Stark naked and raging, he was held while the white man examined him. The hands, scarred and gnarled with many years of fishing, paddling and hard field work, received brief inspection. His left foot was lifted from the floor and held, sole upward. The arch had been pierced years before by a piece of jagged coral and the cicatrix stood out an uncanny white against the brown of the rest of the foot.

"Dry leprosy," said the white. "I concur with Dr. Hallows' diagnosis. Have him made ready to leave for Kaulapapa on the *Mokolii* tonight."

Kaliho tore himself loose and sought the white man's throat. More guards ran in. With the other three they bore him to the floor. Trussed and bound with ropes, he was placed in a corner of the room. They threw a blanket over his naked form. The white man turned and left without even a glance at the old chief.

Clothed by main force, and then again bound, Kaliho was taken aboard the wretched little leper steamer. His tired body was past struggling, but in his eyes, when they carried him ashore at the settlement on Molokai, blazed the ferocity of the old warriors of Rapa Nui, cradle of the Polynesian race.

He was registered at Kaulapapa and assigned to one of the whitewashed huts that, like tombstones, stud the peninsula jutting out of the northern coast of Molokai into the ocean.

They unbound him and let him go. As he straightened his chafed limbs, he looked south where the Kamakoo range of Molokai formed a precipice two thousand feet high for the entire width of the leper settlement, from Kaulapapa to Kalawao. Inaccessible in any event, the

wall of rock was made doubly so by the chain of armed guards stationed at the top to prevent escape. None of the afflicted had ever succeeded in scaling that cliff. Dead they were, the government said, and dead they should stay.

A priest, one of the many good men who condemn themselves to the living death, that the people of the settlement might be ministered to, approached him. He led the old chief to the white hut that was to be his tomb and pleaded with Kaliho to resign himself to his fate. The native remained deaf to everything he said.

His brain was a turmoil. The safety of his daughter; revenge on Hallows; the protection of his own people on Kauai; the insult of being manhandled at the receiving station in Honolulu came and went in an ebb and flood of thought.

"I have no *mai pake*," he said at last. "I am sent here through the desire of a scoundrel for my lands and my daughter."

It was the usual cry of the newly received patient at Kaulapapa. The priest had heard it hundreds of times before. This man would calm down as others had. Murmuring a blessing, he left Kaliho still gazing at the frowning precipice.

With darkness, Kaliho left the neighborhood of the white cottage. He would take no chance in sleeping within the walls that had been mute witnesses of many a man's decay, while still alive. In the moonlight he went closer to sentinel the precipice. It promised nothing.

He turned to the shore. None interfered as he walked as far as the landing. The ocean itself was guard enough, the authorities held. Where the peninsula and mainland formed a corner, there was no beach at all. This, too, the authorities had taken into consideration. The sharks infesting the waters there were effective and never sleeping watchdogs. Turning away, Kaliho marched in long strides to the extreme northwest point of the settlement. Reaching it he stopped and gazed upward as if in prayer. He looked eastward and noted the large wooden cross that marked the grave of one of the priests who died for the lepers. For a moment he scanned it, then, without a sound, sank to the grass and fell asleep.

Kaliho dreamed of Lehua, who at that moment was listening to the strains of a guitar and *taro-patch* fiddle, expertly played on the veranda of the Hilo hotel by two musicians hidden behind a screen of potted ferns and *ti* plant. She hummed in harmony with the throbbing music.

THE GIRL half reclined in a long cane chair, clad in the simple white affected by all island women, native or foreign. The dim light of the swinging lanterns touched the crimson hibiscus in her hair, coiled in a glistening black rope around her shapely head.

At her feet sat Hallows, who had arrived only that day and who was pleading with her to return to Kauai.

"My father sent me here," the girl said, "and I am to go to my relatives at Waipio tomorrow."

"But, Lehua, I tell you Kaliho has changed his mind. He wants you to come home again." he answered.

"And you?" she asked.

"I, Lehua? The island is not Kauai without you," he said. "Come back. You can leave tomorrow and be home in three days."

"But that other woman, your wife?"

Her father had told her then, Hallows thought. No matter, he would still win out.

"She has not seen me for seven years," he said quietly. "She only wants money, and when she can get enough, she will divorce me."

"If you say so, I will go back," the girl said, "but I am lonely on that mountain."

"Don't go to the mountain to live," he urged. "Stay in Waimea. You can ride up to see your people whenever you like. I will have my housekeeper arrange for you. Your father will not oppose it. You shall have your music, and guitars and ukuleles shall be played for you by the best musicians the island can produce. Will you come?"

"I will come," she said simply.

Hallows rose and offering his hand, drew her from the chair. She stood before him in all the beauty of face and figure that marked the aristocratic women of her race. Even in the gloaming her vivacity of expression and the glow of her eyes were not lost.

He kissed her.

For a brief moment she hung limp in his arms, shaken to her heart's depth. This man had never told her so, but he loved her. And she, with island impetuousity, had chosen to love him. She would return and leave Kauai no more.

"Go now," she whispered, "and come early tomorrow."

The sun was rising when Hallows and Lehua went aboard the *W. G. Hall.* Cocoanut Island protected the bay from a northeast wind that was whipping the ocean into a mass of white horses away to the horizon. The lines of palms along the beach swayed and bent their plumed crowns as the boat made for the open sea, and turned northwest toward Honolulu.

All day the two walked the deck or lounged in the comfortable cane chairs. When the steamer, closely coasting the island, passed the gulch of Waipio, and the purpling shades of the setting sun were giving way to the night mantle of soft white cloud that crept up and around the verdured hills behind, Lehua brought up her guitar and sang, and Hallows, the devil within him for the time subdued, sang with her.

At Honolulu they found a boat ready to sail for Kauai and without loss of time, transferred to her. Dawn found them on deck again, on the lookout for their garden isle. As the east coast of Kauai came into view, Lehua delightedly pointed out every familiar spot to him.

"See," she chattered. "There is the sunken reef at the foot of our own little valley. That steel pole you see sticking out of the ocean about a quarter of a mile from shore was driven into the coral below by my father, so our fishermen should know the shallows at high tide, when, unless the sea is very rough, there are no breakers to show the place. They anchor there too, and dive for squid. At night you can see their torches of *naio* wood which bring the blue fish to the top where the men can spear them. I have seen my father hurl a spear of *kauila* wood straight through the body of a shark, all of it straight through."

Hallows could not repress a shudder. This Hawaiian could hurl a spear through the body of a shark. He had seen one of those spears, barbs reversed and loose so that the object selected for the target should retain all the devilish contrivances in its body.

But Kaliho was at Kaulapapa, whence none ever returned. Hallows made up his mind to tell the girl some time that her father had developed the dread disease and had gone there of his own accord. The circumstances of his departure from Waimea were sufficient proof. She would then learn to forget. As for the wife in Apia, she could do as she liked. The monthly remittance would be sent as usual and if she did not divorce him— Well, marriage could wait, he told himself.

"Do you think my father will be at Waimea," Lehua asked.

"I really forgot," he answered. "I meant to tell you, but you make me forget everything. He is in Honolulu attending to some business, but will be back in two weeks. That is one reason why I wanted you to stay in Waimea."

They arrived in the bay before noon. Hallows lifted her into the whaleboat that took them ashore. The few persons at the pier paid no attention to them, and she and the surgeon walked to his house, leaving their luggage for the Japanese servants to bring later.

In the week that followed, Lehua asked no questions and Hallows volunteered no information. She lived at the home of Hallows' housekeeper, a half white with all the smug respectability of the missionary educated women of her type.

They rode together every morning, away toward Mana, and swam afterwards. Then Lehua would take her music lessons while Hallows made his rounds.

IT WAS midnight just a week after they had landed. The wind had dropped with the sunset and the low monotonous beat of the surf upon a distant reef absorbed all other noises of the night.

Hallows lay half asleep on a cane and straw couch on his veranda, which Lehua had left half an hour before. Over the hardwood floor came suddenly a wild rush of naked feet and the quick panting of broad brown breasts of island men. Like lightning they were upon him. A bandanna was stuffed into his mouth as powerful hands tore his lower jaw down. Another was quickly tied around his face. An attempt to resist was immediately frustrated by eager hands. In a trice he was thrown prone across a flat saddle and bound hand and ankle to a horse. As noiselessly as they had come, the brown figures left, one of them leading the animal up the bridle path that ended at Kaliho's home.

There they threw Hallows like a sack of yams to the floor of the thatched bungalow. In the dim rays of an oil lantern he discerned Kaliho's face; immobile, relentless, regal.

"Where is my daughter?" Kaliho asked the natives.

"She is coming with Alika and Malihi," his chief retainer, Mainapo, answered.

"Let us wait," the old chief said.

An hour Hallows lay on his side eyed by the motionless Hawaiian. Sounds of subdued voices were heard coming toward the house. Among them he could distinguish the soft tones of Lehua. The two retainers and the girl entered. Around the open door clustered more than a score of other men, all Kaliho's people. At sight of Hallows, Lehua shrieked. Mainapo, at a sign from her father, clapped a hand over her lips. Another sign from her father and she was forced into the squatting position used by the natives in council. Alika and Malihi sat one on each side of her. Mainapo walked over and stood above the bound man.

"*Haole,*" the old chief said evenly, "you have violated the custom of Hawaii; you have violated the laws of your own God and people. I ask not what you would say, for there is naught you could say. You sent me to Molokai knowing I was, and am, clean. You would steal my child. Through her you would steal my lands for the *malahini*, and for them you would also take the lands of these, my people. Your own God, *haole*, willed it otherwise. Kaulapapa is the living death from which there is no escape. Yet through your own God I have come back. There was, *haole*, at the white church of Kaulapapa, a cross, big as two canoes fastened one across the other. It marked the grave of the good *haole* father who gave his life for those condemned with *mai pake*. And the cross was made of *wiliwili* wood, such as we use for the outriggers of our canoes. It is the lightest wood known, *haole*, and I took it. I took it in the night and I took the *cruse* of cocoanut oil from the good sisters' medicine room.

"I smeared my body with the oil, *haole*, for the sea is cold at night between Kalaeo Point and Koko head, and my fathers told me that the sharks like not cocoanut oil. So I took the cross as I have said and I broke away the beam and fastened beam and pole together, like a close held catamaran. We dropped into the ocean, the cross and I, and with the east wind I floated, sometimes I swam, and the cross took me safe to Koko head on Oahu. And from there I walked to Waimanalo and sold to my cousin these lands which you coveted. I bought a schooner through the same cousin and I came home to my island to see what you had done, *haole*. And what you have done is bad. Is it so, my daughter?"

"*Aia;* it is so," she barely whispered, as the horror of Hallows' crime came home to her.

"I am a dead man, *haole*," Kaliho continued. "You have killed me, for even now Kaulapapa has told Honolulu I have left. They may not think I have been eaten by sharks and then they will search, and if they find me here I shall

be sent back. Your own law condemns you, *haole*. A life for a life."

He rose to his feet and addressing the natives in their own tongue, chanted his death song. He sang of the glory of his ancestors who had come to Hawaii from far Rapa Nui ten centuries before. He sang of the wars of the three kingdoms, Oahu, Hawaii and Lanai, and of the first coming of the white man who brought them the music and the stringed guitars of Spain. He sang of the great Kamehameha and the dead chiefs who followed him, and then he cursed the white man who had despoiled him. Turning, at last, to Mainapo, and then to Lehua, he said:

"We leave our island home forever. Make ready. The schooner waits. My daughter, you come with us. In far Liu Kiu, or in the Ladrones, Kaliho exiled, must finish his years. They are few and when they are done you may return to your own. It will not be long for you, my child. Let us go."

They took the girl by a hidden pathway down to the beach where a dingy waited. She was rowed out to the schooner riding at anchor half a mile away. The tide was out and the steel rod Kaliho had driven down into the submerged coral to mark the sunken reef, stood out above the little breakers, easily distinguishable in the mists of dawn.

TO THIS pole an outrigger canoe was paddled. In it lay the bound form of the white man. The old chief steered and Mainapo, Alika and Malihi paddled. As they neared the rod the three paddlers ceased, and lifting the white man to the outrigger arm, they stripped him of his clothes. Malihi leaped overboard and seized the motionless figure as they lowered it over the side.

Deftly a second rope was passed around chest and waist and fastened to the steel spike. The Hawaiian then dived and made fast the ankles to the pole under water. The bandana was removed from Hallows' mouth. Foaming, he cursed them; prayed for mercy; whined. Stolid silence was his answer. Serenely indifferent, the men turned the canoe to the schooner. The clothes they had taken from the surgeon they burned to tatters and scattered on the waves. Scraping the sides of the larger vessel, the canoe was seized by eager hands and hauled aboard as her crew leaped to the deck. The schooner, anchor a-weigh, put out to sea.

She moved as the first breath of the morning wind bellied out her mainsail Slowly she slipped past the curving, palm lined beach that fringed the shore to the point marking the end of Kamukahi channel. Across it lay Niihau in the morning mist. Then she turned outward, with shining sides dipping into the long sapphire rollers of the Pacific, bearing Kaliho west toward the Liu Kius, and safety.

Back on the mountain crest his people watched her glide below the horizon. Then they turned their gaze to the sunken reef. The breakers had ceased as the waters deepened. The steadily incoming tide was bringing with it a swarm of grim gray devils of the tropic sea. Lazily they stirred near the surface, from which broke, every now and then, an ominous fin. The blunt snouts, over immense jaws lined with triple rows of saw teeth that could sever an inch plank, all pointed toward the steel pole.

The waters were now at the breast of the object tied there, once a man, now a jibbering thing of terror, waiting, waiting . . .

BALD BUTTE OR BUST

A highly amusing story of a man who organized a modern Covered Wagon Train

By HARRY G. HUSE

"AGAIN I repeat, my invisible friends, with all the sincerity and passion of my being, there is a single cause and one cause only; there is a single remedy and one remedy alone for the present plight of agriculture . . ."

"Humph!" said Dry Land Dawson. "Another one of these here Farmers' Friends! Shut him off, Red. I'd rather listen to them 'Canning Hints' or that 'Health and Beauty and the Modern Uncorseted Figger'."

A burly form squatted before the portable radio, and a big hand fumbled with the dials. Shrieks and wailings assaulted the cool night air.

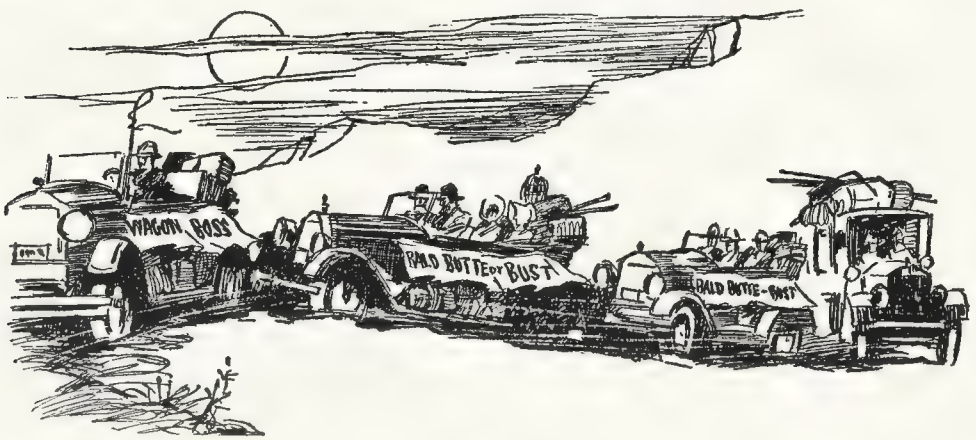
"Seemed like he had a real good speaking voice, that feller," objected the man from the Goosebill. "Way they interduced him he must of been a big high-muckeymuck."

"What he was, all right," agreed the old homesteader. "A big smart man that's give his best thought to working out the farmers' problem 'thout never having had manure on his shoes."

"Just the same, the way he started out he was on the right track," persisted the man from the Goosebill, "saying the thing the farmers ought to do was organize. Saying they ought to stand together. Like you take it in the Eagles or the Red Men—"

"Say!" said Fife, the water-wagon flunkey. "We already shut up one public speaker!"

"Just the same," went on the man from the Goosebill, undaunted, "a man by hisself's a weak and puny creature. But you join him up to something and his strength is multiplied. One for all and all for everybody!" He gestured off across a great reach of purple prairie



where a single light glowed ruddily in the gathering dusk. "That's the way they should of settled up this country, and she'd of stayed settled. We wouldn't have to pull no two, three miles for each new setting—"

"Hmm!" said Dry Land Dawson.

He paused to clear his throat with a vigor that set at naught all lesser sounds, including the screechings of summer static.

"There's food for thought," he said mildly, "in what Goosebill's saying."

"Sure there is," said the man from the Goosebill with enthusiasm.

"Food for thought," continued Dry Land, "not to mention subject matter for contemplation. For the reflective mind there's pros and likewise cons to the question of individual efforts, and efforts made in large groups."

"That's right," said the man from the Goosebill, a trifle vaguely. " 'United we stand up', as the feller says; 'divided we fall down'."

"Arguments for and arguments agin," continued the old homesteader with a fine dignity. "Certain hooman activities like Sunday School picnics and brass bands and lynchings are better done in large parties. At the same time there's other important things like gitting born and making love and dying that has to be done alone. The subject is one that will stand considerable roomination."

His glance swept the lounging circle, and halted for a moment upon the spike pitcher who labored, tongue in cheek, at further futile adjustments of the dials.

"I find myself thinking," he suggested, "in so far as thinking is possible amidst the caterwaulings of yonder wonder of the modern age—I find myself thinking of Otto Pflueger and the Bald Butte Caravan and its band of bonded brothers."

HE FELL silent as one who forebears to offer his ripened judgments to distracted ears. A hand thrust over the shoulder of the spike pitcher, and a final shriek hiccoughed and died in the throat of the loud speaker. A grateful quiet, broken only by the soothing sound of champing jaws and intermittent expectoration, fell upon the lounging group.

"As is the case with most big elegant ideas," said the old homesteader, when he had mustered his memories, and further observations of the man from the Goosebill had been muffled by a three-finger pinch of somebody else's Tiger fine cut, "the Bald Butte expedition to which I have referred had a simple beginning.

"While it was generally give out that the movement was a inspired Westward surge of noble hearted men and women seeking the freedom of these wide open plains in the same spirit the Children of Israel hit out for Canaan, the thing really all started when Goldie Schultze, that was a daughter of Adolphe Schultze that run a meat market in Brooklyn, was going home from her vacation in Glacier Park and happened to look out the window when the train stopped to let a long freight go by at Bald Butte.

"It was four, five years after the war and the town was just about flat. The land's poor there, being too porous to hold the moisture, and the dry landers had all got discouraged and quit. The ranches all belonged to the banks and loan companies and they'd organized a chamber of commerce and had put up one of these big signs that said you was now in Bald Butte, Montana, where wheat growed as high as your head and run forty bushels to the acre, and land could be had for next to nothing on account of the country being new and why not make this fine Western town your home and lead a big, independent outdoor life like the one that made strong men and noble women out of your grandpaws and grandmaws. Down at the bottom it said write the secretary of the chamber of commerce for full free particulars.

"There was three, four good looking sunburned fellers in khaki pants and high laced boots lounging around on the station platform in front of the sign, and it made such an impression on Goldie, who'd never been any too good looking and was

now gitting oldish, that she wrote the name of the town down in her diary and when she got back home to Brooklyn she spent about as much time talking about Bald Butte and the opportunities there as she did telling about God's great outdoors and how shocked she was when one of the cowpuncher guides up to the Park made advances to her.

"It wasn't long until she'd got to the point where she set down and wrote the secretary like it said, hoping he might of been one of the fellers she'd saw on the platform, or at any rate, one like them.

"As it turned out, the secretary of the chamber of commerce wasn't one of the men she'd saw, who was probably fellers off a gang that was putting through a new road survey, but was a big, soft looking young man with a wide mouth and wavy black hair that had been a Y. M. C. A. secretary for a while, and a nursery tree salesman and an automobile demonstrator, and then a Non-Partisan League organizer and was said to be full of high powered personal magnetism and had been hired mostly by the loan companies to see if he couldn't git some more suckers to come in and try to farm. His name was Bullitt—Edward Livingston Bullitt—and he was chuckful of ambition to make big speeches and git folks so excited they'd be willing to do all the hard work.

"He was the kind of feller that ain't got no patience for little things, but is always on the lookout for million dollar ideas. When he got this letter from Goldie Schultze, he'd been on his new job for six months. He'd put up the big signboard Goldie'd seen, and'd got out a lot of literachoor with some old photographs of crops that'd once been raised on bottom land near Bald Butte in a wet year, and'd held weekly git together meetings of the town's business men and slapped them on the backs and called them all by their first names. He'd stop everybody he met on the street and talk to them about making two blades of grass grow where one had growed before.

"But he didn't have no new settlers to show except one poor feller that'd busted down in his Ford on the way through to Oregon and hadn't had enough money left to git it fixed and git out of town. The loan companies that was putting up the money for his salary was commencing to complain, and Bullitt was having to talk louder and jollier all the time.

"Then he got this letter from Goldie Schultze. As was to be expected, she hadn't just asked for information about opportunity and Bald Butte like it said to do on the sign. She'd gone on and give out considerable information herself, about how she had saw the boundless West and felt the lure of the big wide open spaces, and had noted its strong and vyrile men who were conquering the prairies and doing big things in a big way.

"She hadn't done herself no injustice in the things she wrote him. While she was only a stenographer, she said, she was the daughter of a substantial Brooklyn business man who, like herself, often chafed under the restraints of the city and often expressed a longing for a bigger, freer life where there wasn't so many grafting refrigerator inspectors.

"Since her return from what she said would always be to her from now on the land of the sky blue water, she had taken every opportunity to tell her many, many friends and the many, many friends of her father who also were substantial business men longing for release from the cramping confines of the city, of the wonderful State of Montana with its scenery and its opportunities for those of pioneer spirit, and of its strong and vyrile men.

"She was reading, she went on to say, everything she could find regarding Montana and the big lives its people lived, and she had been five times to see that 'Epic of Courage and Fortitude', the moving pitcher entitled 'Westward Ho!' that was gripping the emotions of one and all in the metropolis. It left her more than proud and happy that she for one had seen this land of promise and had noted the heritage of strength and vyrility which these wonderful old pioneers had bequeathed to Montana's strong and

vyrile men. Would he please write and tell one who was more than interested, of the life out there and the opportunities for cramped souls that yearned to soar and be free.

"WELL, when that letter come in the morning mail along with a letter from the loan companies wanting a report of the actual number of new settlers brought in, it seemed like Edward Livingston Bullitt was needing to listen for the big opportunity to knock with both his ears.

"If Miss Goldie hadn't mentioned them friends of her father's or if she hadn't referred to that moving pitcher, he'd likely just of sent off his literachoor and wrote her a letter telling her of the big life a bachelor girl like herself, who already loved what he likewise found no words better described than the land of the sky blue water, might live as a big lady wheat rancher. The way things was then, one *bonafidey* new settler, male or female, would of looked as big to him as a whole colony did when he took the job.

"But he'd saw 'Westward Ho!' his own self and had got a kick out of it, and when he come to that part of her letter there come into his mind one scene from that epic drammer where a string of covered wagons creeped across a great plain, with mottoes scrawled on the sides of the canvas, and women's and children's heads sticking out in front and behind, and men with whiskers and muzzle loaders on horseback, and Indians in war paint lurking off in the distance, and he throwed back his head and run his hands through his big mop of hair, and turned his mind loose in a big way, and here comes the million dollar idea.

"In less than no time he'd got a letter off to Goldie Schultze, and another to her paw, and others to the sales managers of all the big automobile manufacturers, and still others to the loan companies, and'd called a meeting of the town merchants and made a big speech, and'd had pitchers of himself and the mayor took in big hats to have ready to send East to the big newspapers when they was called for, and though they didn't know it yet, a big new life was opening up for Adolphe Schultze and twenty-nine other good solid adventuresome Brooklyn fellers!"

The old homesteader fell silent for a moment, as one who ponders the imponderables and seeks dispassionately for the answer to the enigma of human nature.

"Goosebill here has already claimed," he resumed, "that you git a bunch of ordinary men together and all het up by an organizer and there ain't hardly nothing they can't do. What he should of said is that there ain't hardly nothing too outlandish for them to try to do. Like I read in the paper the other day where some club gives a banquet for a prize winning Holstein cow, and there was a big scramble among substantial business men, who probably wouldn't even stand for a canary bird in the house to home, to see who, besides the mayor, and the preacher that give the invocation returning thanks for so much milk, and her owner and the hired hand that done the chambermaid work, should have the honor of being at the head table beside her.

"Seems like the more sober minded a man is by himself, the more he is the other way when he gits joined up with other fellers. You give him a badge to wear, or a fancy colored hat band with gold letters on it, or a fancy uniform and some kind of a grand mogul title that means he's doorkeeper and cuspidor tender, and even if he's been the kind of a feller that wears both a belt and suspenders to keep his pants up, he's all ready for any kind of didos. It's worse now than it was before prohibition, 'cause them days a man could git rid of a lot of his natural born foolishness and pass it off that he was drunk.

"For all his big talk and personal magnetism and theater actor manners, Edward Livingston Bullitt really knowed a lot about these soft places in hooman nature. You'd think the last folks on earth that would be likely agercultural

pioneers would be a bunch of city grocers and butchers and delicatessen dealers with mostly fat wives. You'd think the last thing on earth they'd be willing to do would be to give up their white aprons and start calling each other 'pardner' and let their whiskers grow. No matter how tired they got of cutting off chops and weighing prunes and splitting the profits with the inspectors, you wouldn't think nothing short of a chance to live next to an old time brewery would jar them loose from their steam heated flats to come out here to a country where the water would undoubtedly be sky blue, providing there was any water.

"There was genius all right in Edward Livingston Bullitt's idea and the way he worked it out. For all the old time features of his proposition he sure knowed the spirit of the modern age.

"Paw Schultze ain't hardly had time to read his letter clear through, telling him of the opportunities for business men like himself as agercultural pioneers in the coming granary of North America, and offering him the job of Brooklyn Organizer and Wagon Boss of the Bald Butte Expedition; and Goldie ain't yet located a pitcher of herself when she was eighteen to send to her new found and helpful friend as a means of gitting better acquainted, when here come reporters and photographers from three, four papers on a telegraphed tip from Bald Butte, wanting exclusive pitcher and news rights on the story, and insisting on taking snapshots of this Twentieth Century Dan'l Boone standing beside his butcher's block with a quarter of beef looming up behind him.

"While the old man's still grumbling about the damn' fool idea, and making like he ain't proud to see his pitcher in the papers along with a list of other famous leaders of westward migrations from Davy Crockett up to him, here come letters from two, three automobile companies asking for the honor of furnishing at half price or less the vehicles that is to be the modern equivalent of the old time covered wagon.

"YOU HAVE to give it to Bullitt. He'd got it all worked out down to the smallest details. There was titles for each member of the expedition and big 'Bald Butte or Bust' signs on the sides of each car along with the advertisement of the make of automobile that was finally selected. There was a free ranch for the Wagon Boss and the first five men to join the expedition, and half price for the next ten with five years to pay off in without no interest, only the taxes. There was parades and big receptions planned in all the principal cities through which the caravan would pass, and the women was to wear blue calico sunbonnets and the men black slouch hats with the whiskers already mentioned. There was even a cash bonus of a thousand dollars for any babies born on the trip and free condensed milk of a special brand if it turned out to be a bottle baby.

"Yes, sir! You had to give it to him to figure out the kind of bait to use to interest a bunch of substantial, plugging citizens that as matters stood, didn't have nothing more exciting to look forward to during the rest of their lives than a fire in the next block, or maybe now and then, a big murder trial. And you had to give him credit too for knowing when the time was ripe for him to make his big play in person and go back East wearing his big hat and cowboy boots under his pants, and take charge of the meetings the pioneers had commenced to hold, and work things up to a fever heat and win over the women that was holding back and git the expedition really started."

Again the old homesteader fell silent, his bachelor eyes contemplating with a mild melancholy the void of darkness beyond the circle and the lone yellow light bearing witness of at least one scene of cheery domesticity in all those lonely, wind whispering leagues.

"As is to be expected," he said, with something approximating a sigh, "in all hooman activities, the gentle yet none the less powerful element of love early

exerted its influence upon the course of events.

"I have already mentioned Adolphe Schultze's oldest daughter, Goldie, and pointed out how her being hungry for romance put her and the pioneers in touch with Edward Livingston Bullitt. I have failed to mention his other daughter, Justine, who was six years younger and real pleasant and restful to the eye. I have also failed to say anything about Otto Pflueger that had pale blue eyes and light hair and a round, friendly face and worked for Adolphe in the meat market, and laid awake nights thinking about Justine.

"Neither one of them has give much thought to the Bald Butte proposition. Justine's having so much fun running around to dances and moving pitchers with other fellers and breaking Otto's heart that she ain't had time to listen to all the talk and planning that Goldie and her father are doing to home; and Otto's so love sick and happy and despondent that he just lets what he hears and sees at the shop go in one ear and out the other. He's signed up as one of the first five new settlers just to please his boss, and to be certain that if Justine's going away anywhere he's going too. But being one of these slow thinking fellers that's got too much weight ever to be stampeded, he thinks the whole thing is just a fool plan and won't never come to nothing. All his ambition's to keep on saving his money and git a shop of his own and a furnished flat with Justine settled down in it keeping house and after awhile making baby clothes.

"He don't say nothing for or against the Bald Butte expedition. He just works faithful in the shop, cutting meat and wrapping it up, and goes regular to the Bald Butte or Bust meetings with Adolphe, and keeps still while the others talk big and git all excited, and is sad and unhappy when Justine's cavorting around with other fellers, and so pleased he can't hardly stand it when she'll go out with him to the pitcher show or maybe down to Coney Island.

"He's just letting things run along, and being reliable and faithful, and hoping to git Justine in the end after she's run around and had the fun a pretty girl's entitled to when she ain't yet twenty-one. But everything's all changed when Edward Livingston Bullitt shows up on the scene.

"It's hard to say who's most put out by what happens when he comes, Otto or Goldie Schultze. Goldie ain't been able to sleep nights since they got the news that her strong and vyrile correspondent from the West is really coming. She's got herself a lot of new clothes and one of these here permanent waves in her hair, and has took a riding lesson in some big park there in Brooklyn, and has secretely got herself together a cow girl costume. She's down to the station with her father and the other officers of the Bald Butte or Bust Expedition when the secretary of the chamber of commerce comes breezing in, and though he ain't sunburned and lean faced and vyrile in the way she expected, he's so impressive looking and elegant and refined that she's dead in love with him the minute she sets eyes on him.

"HE TREATS her real admiring on the way back to Schultze's from the depot, and I guess Goldie gits glimpses of their friendship quickly ripening into something more substantial. But when they git home, there's Justine just come prancing in from the movies with Otto with her eyes sparkling and her curly hair flying, and the minute Edward Livingston Bullitt sets his eyes on her seems like he ain't got no time to listen to Goldie talking about the romance and charm of what she more than ever finds herself impelled to call the land of the sky blue water.

"Things happen fast with Edward Livingston Bullitt on the job. He's stopped off at Detroit and two, three other places on his way East and got arrangements all made for the automobiles, and the tents the pioneers is to camp in nights, and the gasoline camp stoves, and the

folding cots and tire patches and other items of wagon train equipment. By picking second rate firms he's got the promises of most of the stuff for nothing for the advertising the things'll git from big signs each automobile will carry. He's tipped off all the newspapers along the route, and made arrangements with other chambers of commerce, and planned parades and receptions.

"Now that he's right on the ground he holds meetings of the pioneers every night in a hall up over Adolphe Schultze's store, and gives out news stories every day, and gradually wins over the women by ways he's learned when a nursery tree salesman. Everybody's all excited and het up except Goldie, that ain't never had but that one first chance to talk to him about strong and vyrile men, and except Otto Pflueger, that Justine ain't had so much as a second look for since Bullitt with his big ways and wavy black hair got on the job.

"There ain't nothing Otto can do except talk agin the whole fool idea whenever he gits a chance. He makes himself purty disagreeable to the enthusiastic pioneers, some of who has already sold out their businesses, by wanting to git up in the meetings and ask a lot of questions about how the land comes to be so cheap around Bald Butte that the owners is willing to give it away, and how much rain there is falls in a year, and what's become of the people that used to own the ranches, and why not git the names of some folks that's already tried to farm out there and find out what they think about it, 'stead of believing everything they're told.

"It's plain to Bullitt and to the others that Otto's lacking in the true pioneer spirit and it's a mistake to have him as a member of the expedition, and they make it so cold and disagreeable for him that he takes his name off the list. Adolphe has sold his meat market by this time and the new owner has brought in his own cutter, and Otto has to git himself another job. Justine's time is so took up by Bullitt that she won't have nothing to do with Otto no more. The only friend he's got among the Schultzes is Goldie, and she's so sour he don't take no pleasure in her.

"He feels purty low, I guess, and in spite of its foolishness wishes he was still a member of the expedition. But his place has already been snapped up by a fruit dealer, and there ain't nothing left for Otto to do but read the stories of the approaching start of the Bald Butte or Bust caravan, and look at the pitchers of Wagon Boss Schultze and Tire Wrangler Herzog and Advance Agent Edward Livingston Bullitt and Mrs. Weber that expects to win the first thousand dollars somewhere along about South Bend, Indianny, and 'Prairie Rose' Justine Schultze whose flaxen curls straying out from under a blue gingham sunbonnet will grace the leading wagon.

"I will pass over the tremendous labors of the next two months as the pioneers went steadily ahead with their preparations. As I said before there ain't nothing solid, substantial men can't do if you git them het up, and their wives don't hold them back. It's easy to figger the big feelings that worked the pardners up to fever heat as their fame spread over the country and they had more and more pitchers took, and the heartburnings too that must of weakened some when they laid down the cleaver and the cheese knife and put off the white apron forever, and as they bid farewell to cozy flats full of overstuffed furniture and gold fish and enlarged family portraits and put out family cats for the last time. I will leave you to draw your own pitcher of the mingled feelings of homesickness, ambition, desperate determination and adventure with which the thirty families that had been finally assembled was mustered for the beginning of their epoch making trip.

"THE START was made June first from the city hall in Brooklyn and several big politicians made a speech. The automobiles was new and shiny and the signs was large and fresh. The whiskers that

Edward Livingston Bullitt had insisted upon for old time picturesqueness was two months long and impressive. There was news reel men and reporters and eminent citizens, and time the last goodbys had been said and the wagon train had got across Brooklyn Bridge, there was another parade in New York and another reception and the handing over of messages to be delivered to mayors along the route, and the expedition didn't git no farther that night than a place called Yonkers. They made a circle of their automobiles in a vacant lot the authorities had provided, and pitched their tents in the center and agin there was reporters and photographers taking flashlight pitchers and plenty of attention for one and all.

"All this time Otto Pflueger's been eating his heart out. He's called himself weak spirited and a fool a hunderd times for deserting the expedition and letting Justine go on without him. Bullitt ain't going to be able to be around her so much, being advance agent traveling ahead to make arrangements, and there's a chance that amidst the dangers and the perils of the expedition Otto would of had a chance to make himself useful to her, and maybe be a hero in her eyes. At the last minute he has tried to git back into the expedition but they won't have him.

"There ain't nothing for him to do but jest watch the wagon train start off in all its glory. He's been to the celebration at the city hall in Brooklyn and waved goodby, but Justine ain't saw him, and then he's got on the subway and rode over to New York and watched the parade there and waved agin without no luck, and that first night he's gone to Yonkers and prowled lonesome around the outside of the circle.

"It ain't until five days later when the expedition's got as far as Albany and is being made a big fuss over there that he gits desperate and knows that he's got to go too. He gives up his job and takes some of the money he's got saved out of the bank and buys himself a second hand Ford. He starts out after the wagon train and ketches up with it before it's half way across New York.

"Everything seems to be going fine with the pioneers so far. The automobiles is all new and running well. The tents don't leak, ain't none of the canvas cots give down, and the gasoline stoves is all working. Every town's a big parade and pitchers took and speeches made and everybody's just one big friendly family.

"Otto ain't welcome at all when he shows up at camp just about dusk. They ain't none of them ever forgave him for the doubts he put in their minds by the troublesome questions he asked, and they think he's a quitter to of deserted the expedition in its earlier stages, and completely lacking in adventuresome pioneer spirit. They all tell him so, even Justine, who's been proposed to six times already by young fellers she's met along the route and is more sparkling and heart breaking than ever. Won't nobody visit with him at all 'cept Goldie, and she don't cheer him up none 'cause all she can do is talk real bitter about how Justine's gitting a letter from Bullitt every day that he ain't with the expedition.

"Otto don't hardly know what to do. He can't feel right not being steady at work and earning money, and yet he feels he's just got to keep an eye on the wagon train. It's a long ways yet to Montana and a lot of things can happen and he's just got to be somewheres close around where he can be ready if he's needed. The pioneers ain't making more than fifty, seventy-five miles a day on account of so many parades and speeches and having to drive slow in between times on account of some of the 'pardners' being new drivers.

"Otto works out the idea of going on ahead three, four hunderd miles and gitting a temporary job as a meat cutter and making his expenses while the expedition's catching up and going on ahead. He'll show up every now and then around dark at some place where the outfit's camped for the night, and git shooed off by Adolphe Schultze, the wagon boss, like he was a coyote, and hooted at by

the younger members of the party, and them times that he does git to see Justine she turns up her nose at him and makes like she's reading one of the many letters Bullitt has sent her from where he's gitting ready for the next big public reception on ahead.

"After while he gits so he won't show himself in the open but just keeps track of the expedition through the newspapers, and'll find out where the camp is and come and prowl around it after dark, or maybe just stand on the sidewalk at some place where the pioneers is giving a parade, and sneak a look at the freckles that's coming out on Justine's nose and the curls peeking out from underneath the sunbonnet.

"IT'S MIDSUMMER and hot by the time the expedition gits as far west as Illinois. Mrs. Weber's won the thousand dollars all right in Indianny, the way she thought, and it has slowed up the trip some. The pioneers is bound by oath to stick together and there's been some grumbling when they had to camp for a couple of weeks while the prize winner's enjoying clean sheets and a mattress in a hospital.

"It takes two days to git properly paraded and entertained in Chicago, and time they've stopped by special arrangement for a week in Milwaukee where they camp 'longside a brewery, and've got across Wisconsin and into Minnesota it's fair time and Bullitt's arranged for them to drum up a lot of publicity for Bald Butte by stopping at a half dozen county seats, and they ain't averaging mor'n twenty-five or thirty miles a day. Seems like the pioneers ain't near as friendly with one another any more as they was when they first started. It's got to be a strain for some of the men to call each other pardner, and there's some of the kids is fighting others all the time, and three, four of the women ain't speaking to one another. The men have found out that while beards must of been the right thing when driving slow moving ox teams in the wintertime, they ain't real comfortable when it's ninety in the shade and there's a good dusty wind blowing.

"Seems too like they've got to growling a little bit about Edward Livingston Bullitt stopping at hotels and showing up spick and span only when there's speeches to be made and pitchers to be took. Some of the pioneers ain't had any too much money to start with, and haven't felt they needed it, so many things being free. They're beginning to worry a little about what's at the other end of the line when they've finished the trip, and to figger what they're going to do after all the entertaining is over with. Time they hit the Red River they're purty tired of parading and sitting at banquets and gitting keys to cities from so many mayors, and a lot of the children have got prickly heat and some of the matrons that was comfortable sized when they left Brooklyn are beginning to git gaunted up some.

"They hold a council at Fargo, North Dakota, and decide they ought to speed up. But now that they've got into the wheat country Bullitt has arranged for them to take it slow so they can talk with county agents and the professors at experiment stations and learn something about the job at which they are going to make their fortunes when they finally git to be wheat ranchers their ownselves, and time they've got half way across the State it's coming on fall.

"They're all set to make speed because the nights is gitting chilly now they're climbing up into a higher altitude, and the tents ain't very comfortable to live in. Wagon Boss Schultze, who's got so's he can drive his car twenty-five miles an hour, lays out longer days' runs and sets a good brisk pace. But seems like these here automobiles they got for nothing have put in their best licks earlier in the trip and things are now beginning to happen to them. Some of the engines are pounding purty bad and now and agin parts falls off and tires give down, and then there's some of the tents have got holes in them, and one gasoline stove has blowed up, and a few more minor things has happened.

"Out in Dakota they git a hailstorm one Sunday when they're in camp. There's a lot of wind with it, and when they pull theirselves out of the mud all the tents that didn't blow right down at the start have got rips in them and there's quite a few of the younguns have got big lumps on their heads where they got hit by hailstones.

"When they hit Montana and the Fort Peck reservation they see their first Injuns. They go into camp in a circle that night so's Edward Livingston Bullitt can git a pitcher of them with some Indian tepees looming menacingly in the background. But it don't do them no good, 'cause they fail to put out a guard and in the morning most of their gasoline and all their spare tires is gone.

"All this time the land's gitting poorer and poorer and the prairies barer and browner. The further the pioneers go the less it looks like they was going to make their fortunes raising wheat. There ain't no trees now and it's got so they have to carry their drinking water with them. The nights are gitting colder and colder and the first mountains they see have got a sprinkling of snow on them.

"OTTO PFLUEGER ain't been seen for a long time. Some one had caught him prowling around the camp back at some place in Minnesota, and once they seen his old Ford trailing them when they was coming into Mandan, North Dakota. But now it seems like he's disappeared. Edward Livingston Bullitt ain't been seen neither since the last pitcher taking at Fort Peck. He'd announced then that he was going straight through to Bald Butte to have everything ready for the wagon train's arrival.

"The last three, four hunderd miles turns into a endurance contest. The towns is far apart and there ain't no more parades. Such towns as there is ain't particularly interested in no seedy, whiskered bunch of dry landers with signs all over their rattling automobiles.

"There ain't mor'n two or three people friendly to each other their next to the last night. Two or three families is broke and wondering where the next meal is to come from. There's several claims they'd like to git their hands on Bullitt. Seems like everybody's used up all the pioneering spirit they've got gitting this far, and ain't got none left for what's still a-coming.

"But the last night Adolphe Schultze lives up to the best traditions and proves himself a real wagon boss. Bald Butte, so they've been told, lays just beyond a low range of mountains they can see on ahead. From Bullitt's description of their future home and Goldie's recollection, which was kind of hazy about everything but the fellers she saw on the platform, Adolphe figures the country will change when they git past the mountains and they'll probably come down into a fine, fertile valley. Now that the most of the hardships is over, it'll be a shame, he tells them, if there's low spirits in the ranks, and if their future neighbors at Bald Butte should see them weak in courage or downcast.

"He makes 'most as good a speech as Bullitt, and then they all sing 'Oh Susanna' like they been doing along the route where they had their parades, and they all yell 'Bald Butte or Bust!' together, and go to bed agin in the dawning of a bright new morning."

Again the old homesteader paused to sigh lugubriously and profoundly for the vain hopes and thwarted yearnings of humankind.

"It is necessary at this point," he resumed, brightening, "to shift our attention to Bald Butte and surrounding territory where man, beast and herbage has been withering up during three months of the dryest weather ever knowed in them parts.

"There arrives in our dusty midst, some three weeks before the expedition shows up, this Otto Pflueger I been telling you about. He turns up one morning in his Ford which is purty noisy but still running, and he don't in no ways resemble either a tourist or a pioneer. He's fought off the urge most Easterners feel as soon

as they cross the Missouri River to git himself a big hat and fancy leather sleeve protectors, and he's just a homely, slow moving, ordinary looking feller with a red friendly face in a dusty blue serge suit. He gits a room at the hotel and washes up, and then goes out on the street where it seems like he's eager to talk to everybody he meets and to ask them questions in his slow, earnest way.

"It don't take him long to find out what he wants to know. During all them months when he's been traveling and working in different places, he's been too lonesome and backward to hunt up any social pleasures and has been going steady to the public libraries and reading everything he can git his hands on about dry farming. He knows a lot about it for a man that ain't never hitched up a team of horses. He knows what he wants to find out, and by keeping away from the chamber of commerce and talking to such homesteaders as are still living on their land, he learns that one year out of ten, if you're lucky and don't git no hail, you can raise wheat up on the bench where Edward Livingston Bullitt has arranged to settle the members of the expedition.

"Being a thorough sort of feller, he ain't content with just what he hears but he goes out every day in that Ford of his and looks over the country for himself. And he comes across a section of bottom land a little ways east of town where, according to the books he's read, you could raise good crops by putting in a water wheel and irrigating from the river. When he checks up to see who owns it he finds it's a pasture belonging to Ed Richards, the town butcher, and Ed's so tired of dry weather and his wife's nagging him so much to go to California, that he offers to sell Otto the meat market cheap and throw in the pasture to boot.

"WELL, the day for the arrival of the pioneers comes round at last. We're still waiting for rain, and there ain't a blade of grass anywheres in town, 'cept a little patch of the court house lawn that's been kept watered. Bullitt has had a speaker's stand put up there and has rustled together a reception committee. There don't seem to be much enthusiasm for the event. Some of the town's leading citizens is wondering what they're going to do with the new settlers after they git here. Even Bullitt seems to of lost some of his personal magnetism and at times looks a little bit worried.

" 'Long about the middle of the afternoon a big cloud of dust comes in sight, and presently the wagon train comes a-thumping and a-coughing up Main Street. It pulls up all around the court house square. Wagon Boss Schultze gits down like he was kind of stiff from long riding, and waits for all the other men to gether round him with their whiskers flapping in the dusty breeze. He's got the heavy blacksnake whip that he's carried all along as a old time badge of his office, and when him and the others starts forward it's observed by some that Edward Livingston Bullitt gits kind of pale.

"The pardners come all in a bunch up to the platform. 'Is this here Bald Butte?' asks Adolphe Schultze.

" 'Gentlemen, it is,' commences the mayor. 'And we are proud to welcome you.'

"Old Adolphe holds up his hand for silence, and what with the long beard and the blacksnake he looks real grand and majestic.

" 'Is this here land we just come through the earthly paradise that me and my companions have given seventy-nine parades and listened to one hundred and twelve speeches to git to?'

" 'Gentlemen,' says Edward Livingston Bullitt, taking hold at this point and throwing back his mop of black hair like he used to do in them inspirational meetings back in Brooklyn, 'the sun kissed acres you have just traversed are indeed the fallow fields where pioneers of your strength and determination will reap a fortune from the soil!'

"He didn't git no further. For a big oldish feller that walked like he might be

stiff in the joints, old Adolphe was fast moving. He lifts up his head and yells 'Bald Butte or Bust!' like it was some kind of a battle cry, and then grabs Bullitt and has him down off that platform before you could say Jack Robinson. The others take a hand now and inside a half minute they got Bullitt all mussed up and half the clothes tore off him. The women come running up now, fierce and violent, bringing several gallon cans of this here corn syrup and two, three pillows and they got the secretary of the chamber of commerce all feathered out in two, three minutes. Then they turn him loose and old Adolphe pops him with the blacksnake to git him started and the whole crowd takes after him yelling with Adolphe still popping him at every step.

"They chase him clean to the edge of town, with the mayor and the city marshal and leading citizens looking on helpless. When they turn around and start back for the court house them of us that's been enjoying the spectacle sober up some 'cause they look real desperate and dangerous, herding along there in a kind of sullen, growling crowd, with old Adolphe lashing his whip like it was a lion's tail, and some of the others stooping down here and there to pick up stones. They got a grudge agin the whole town of Bald Butte for not living up to their expectations, and storekeepers is commencing to worry about their plate glass windows.

"'BOUT this time though they come abreast Otto Pflueger's new butcher shop. They passed it in such a hurry chasing Bullitt they ain't even noticed it, or the preparations Otto's made in that good hearted way of his to make them feel welcome. He's got a big new sign up across the front—Flatbush Market, Otto Pflueger, Prop.—and in the windows he's got a couple of quarters of beef all decorated up fancy like he's learned how to do back home at Christmas time with holes cut through the suet to look like leaves and roses, and 'Welcome to Bald Butte' in fancy letters with scrolls and flourishes. Upstairs in a big room over the shop he's got tables laid out on trestles and a big cold lunch set out and ready, and he's standing there in his shop door in a white apron yelling hello and inviting one and all to come in and make theirselves to home.

"For a minute the pioneers don't know how to take it. But Otto's round red face is so friendly and beaming there ain't no mistaking his intentions and they swarm up the steps and time they've made a big raid on the summer sausages and kippered herrings and dill pickles Otto has provided, the danger of a riot is past.

"Them of the pioneers that has enough money left for railroad fares gits out of town for Brooklyn on the evening train that same night. Some of the others has to be fed by the chamber of commerce until they can write back to relatives and rustle up enough to git them back home. Only Adolphe Schultze and his folks are setting purty. Otto gives Adolphe a job right away running the new meat market so's he can spend his own time rigging up things out on his new ranch along the river. We ain't never had a better meat cutter than old Adolphe in Bald Butte, nor a man that seemed more in love with his job than him. You could almost hear him purr when he got his hands back on a cleaver.

"Otto didn't have none of the qualities necessary for a big pioneer, but he done real well as a wheat farmer. Slow and plugging and taking lots of pains. He built one of these here bungalows for himself and Justine. He's still living over there to Bald Butte where he's got to be a leading citizen. Adolphe made the meat market pay and went into the cattle business."

The old homesteader lapsed into silence, his eyes again seeking the lonely light that twinkled like a ruddy star in the illimitable black reaches of the night.

"This other daughter?" queried Fife. "The one called Goldie?"

"Goldie?" said Dry Land. "She run

after Bullitt and got him down to the river and the syrup washed off, and iodine on the places where her old man had popped him. She married and went off with him before he could git over being low spirited and bruised up and grateful. They're living back in Brooklyn where Bullitt's working out a big scheme for bringing in starved out farmers from the West—what he calls the fresh, vyrile blood of the prairies—and setting them up in a big, cooperative truck farming business on Long Island where everybody's pardners and all pitches in and helps each other."

"Like I was saying," said the man from the Goosebill. "Now you take it, in the Eagles or the Red Men . . ."

BLACK STORM

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

A DAY we followed the wild horse herd,
A day and another day;
A fresh mount and a quick word,
At the relay.

Varney's horse turned a hoolihan,
Varney quit.
A good hand. But a dead man
Is out of it.

Buck and I followed the wild horse herd,
The last day;
A fresh mount and the same word
At the relay:
"The Black Storm leads them yet!"

Gray rock, gray sky and the trail gray,
The cold stars gone.
Crowded, the wild mares surged away,
Breasting the dawn.

Their hoofs on the granite rumbled.
At the cañon ledge
A yearling nickered, stumbled,
Went over the edge.

The herd strung out to follow
Down the old track;
But the stallion shied from the hollow
And broke back.

The rim of the sun spread fire,
Down the far height,
Flamed round the storm-black sire,
A glory of light.

A second—it seemed an age;
Up the sun rolled.
The stallion reared in his rage,
His hoofs raw gold.

Ears flat, crest curved,
A snake's eye,
He charged, reared again, swerved,
Hammered the sky.

Buck flipped a loop, took a dally;
The rope steamed.
I heeled him. Blind mad in a rally.
He battled and screamed.

Fight! Just whisper we fought him
Yes, all the way!
Savage and sullen we brought him,
To the relay.

Three ropes on him we eared him,
In the log corral.
The boys on the top rail cheered him,
As he dealt us hell.

He wasted each man that would ride him.
Buck was first;
And the seventh and last that tried him
He crippled the worst.

* * * * * *

The night fire warm on our faces,
The wind down,
We talked of people and places,
Of range and town.

Quick hoofs drummed out our talking,
Then, a cool surprise,
As Buck from the shadows stalking,
Answered our eyes:

"Too wicked to keep, too noble to kill,
And so,
I turned him loose. He's over the hill,
I let him go."

Down the sky shot a star,
As a rocket flares.
Black Storm, ranging far,
Called to his mares.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST MOVE

THERE was a distant look in the eyes of the gray uniformed figure behind the massive desk which occupied the center of the room. The leonine head, covered by a stiff bristle of military cut iron gray hair, was turned so that the brooding eyes might gaze out of the open window into the beautiful garden in which the château was situated.

Before the desk a group of brilliantly uniformed officers waited for the gray man to speak. The air was tense—the tenseness that hangs over a court room as the judge is about to pronounce a sentence of death.

About the neck of the man at the desk was the order, *Pour le Mérite*, the highest within the power of a grateful Kaiser to bestow. The thick fingered hands of the man were beating in slow rhythm upon the top of the desk as if in time to a tune running through his head. His great barrel chest rose and fell slowly.

Back in the Fatherland they had erected a wooden statue of this man, and a hero worshiping populace had driven gold nails into the wood so that the figure of "Papa Von Hindenburg" might bring new riches to the treasury of a nation plunged into a world war. His forehead was high and bronzed, his nose long and sensitive. His mouth was the mouth of a doer of great deeds, and his chin was the dominant, commanding chin of a leader of men.

Upon his shoulders rested the fate of Imperial Germany. To him the Fatherland looked for victory. Above him there was none. Not even the "All Highest" from his palace in Berlin could command this toughened warrior, this lion of courage and genius of command. Slowly he turned his head away from the beauties of the garden outside. His voice was deep, like that of a bass viol stroked gently, as he spoke—

"You know, of course, that it would mean death for the officer?"

The youngest of the officers in the group stiffened to attention.

"Of course, Excellency," he said eagerly. "But there are a hundred officers who would gladly pay the price of death if they might render this service to the cause. Think of what it means. What is one life when thousands are concerned?"

The field marshal shook his head sadly.

"Herr Captain," he said in the same low tone, "one life has as much value as a thousand. The loss of one life is an important thing. There is always the price that others must pay for that life. There is always a mother and a father; perhaps a wife and children. They know too well the price. I know it too well. I am just as careful about one life as I am about the lives of ten thousand. The man who gives the life does not suffer so much as those he leaves behind. I know—I have suffered."

The officers before the table stared at the old lion of Germany.

CROSS CURRENTS

A Novelette of a Spy of the Air

By GEORGE BRUCE

"But," protested the youngest of them, "this is important. The enemy is about ready to launch a drive. We must know more definitely his plans and how to meet them. The air can give you that information. It can give you photographs and the reports on troop concentrations, but they may be changed over night. We must know for a certainty that the blow will be delivered at a definite place and then take steps to crush that blow."

The field marshal smiled.

"You are young in the ways of war, to press your point upon your commander," he said.

The young officers's face flamed red.

"Pardon, Excellency," he apologized humbly. "I am earnest only in my conviction of the importance of this plan."

There was another silence from behind the desk. Again the old field marshal spoke.

"You propose to have some officer from an air squardon impersonate an American flyer, and join an American group. He will in this way have opportunity to discover plans and troop placements and communicate them to us. How do you expect to overcome the difficulty of getting that officer among the Americans and have him accepted as one of them?"

The young officer smiled grimly.

"War gives one many chances. Suppose we were to keep close watch upon the replacement pools behind the Front. The bases from which newly trained flyers are sent to the Front. Suppose we capture, or knock down one of these flyers before he can join his organization. Suppose we take his uniform and his papers and then have one of our own men, who knows English better than do the Americans, impersonate that officer and actually join the group to which the original officer had been ordered? It can be done. I feel sure it can. There are many men in the air who have lived in the United States. There are many who speak English as well as any American. It would merely take daring. An iron nerve. And iron nerves is one thing the air is noted for."

The field marshal's face was grave.

"It is important that we have information of this nature," he admitted. "If you think it can be done I give you the permission to act. To me it seems an insane thing to hope for results from such a venture. Still, I am not an airman, nor do I know the ways of the air. You have permission to carry out your plan. Report to me when you have news."

The young officer smiled broadly.

"Thanks, Excellency. We will prove to you that the air can do things other than shoot down enemy planes."

AND SO it came to pass that upon the field of a German *jagdstaffel*, a single officer was set apart for the dangerous mission of impersonating an American. He was thoroughly schooled in his part. He expected to play it with the same grim humor he had played the war in the air. No more fitting subject for the venture could have been found than Karl

Von Honig. The young Von Honig had already made a name for himself in the service of the kaiser.

He was a devil-may-care chap. His steel blue eyes and blond hair might have been Anglo-Saxon. His thin lipped mouth suggested a quick temper and a somewhat cruel nature. His chin was the chin of a fighter, and his body that of a trained athlete.

Karl Von Honig had spent five years of his life at an American university. He knew and spoke English faultlessly before going to America. After the five years in school he was as near to being an American as a German could ever be. His speech was the speech of an American, he knew the American psychology, he had played the American games and he had tested the American pleasures. It gave him a secret pleasure to find himself in a position in which he could prove how well he had spent the five years learning to be American.

It was a strange thing, his preparation to penetrate the American Front. Day after day, hour after hour, with calm eye and steady hand he drove his Fokker D-7 to a great height over the Allied lines, and lay concealed in the sun. Many times single ships flew below him, ships that were marked with the red, white and blue circles of the Allied Air, but he permitted them to pass unchallenged even though he knew they would be easy victims to his fierce rush out of the blue.

Always he watched the horizon to the south and east. He was watching for a lone ship to appear over the horizon. A ship that would fly along a trifle uncertainly, as if the pilot were studying unfamiliar ground below and checking his position upon a map, trying to find the base to which he had been ordered.

Karl Von Honig knew that he would not mistake that uncertain green pilot. He had watched too many of them come up from his own rear lines. He knew that the act of approaching the Front for the first time, alone, made a new man nervous and uncertain. The fear that he would overfly his own lines and thus fall easy prey to the enemy was enough to make him over-cautious. And so, Karl Von Honig, at twenty thousand feet, concealed by the fierce rays of the sun, waited patiently, day by day, for the moment when he would dive with flaming guns and begin his impersonation of an American officer.

He knew his part too well. The more he thought it over the surer he became that it would be simple. He was too far behind the Allied lines to fear interference from pursuit planes. He was too far behind the lines to be easily spotted by infantry observers. He knew that when the minute for action came he would be sighted and that troops would come running from somewhere to the place on the ground he expected to land, but he knew that he needed just two minutes after he landed to make his plans perfect.

He smiled as he glanced down at the uniform he wore. It was American, but without marks of identification. The American tunic and whipcord trousers, high cordovan boots, khaki shirt beneath the tunic, goggles and helmet of American make and design taken from captured American flyers. He laughed aloud—it would be simple. Still, there was one act that caused his thin lipped mouth to draw up into a straight line. If he did not kill the unsuspecting pilot in fair fight in the air—well. A light of disgust seeped into his eyes. Still, war was war, and one could not choose the way to make war.

On the third day of his sky ambush, Karl Von Honig was rewarded. Back at an American replacement pool a rather nervous lieutenant climbed into the cockpit of a new and shining Spad. An officer with maple leaves upon his shoulder handed him a thin sheaf of papers.

"Your orders, old boy." He smiled as he handed them up to the tense pilot. "You're going up at last, and I believe you'll make a name for yourself up there. Just remember to keep up flying speed and shoot at anything that has crosses on it, and you can't go wrong. The boys up at 69 will take care of you and show you around before they turn you loose to

make the world safe for Democrats. Everything O.K.?"

The young pilot licked his dry lips and essayed a grin.

"I'm as nervous as a cat," he confessed with a hysterical laugh. "I feel that the minute I drag this crate off the ground every Jerry between here and Potsdam will be waiting to take a crack at me. I feel just like I did one time when I was a kid, and I went up into the dark garret in a haunted house. Boy, I was sure scared—and I'm more scared right now."

"They all feel that way the first time solo under war conditions," comforted the major. "You won't even see a Jerry till you get to the boys at the 69th. You'll be flying over good, safe Allied ground, and all you have to do is watch your map and follow your course and you'll be taking tiffin with your new outfit. Allez oop, and don't forget to keep your nose down."

The young pilot grinned and ducked his head inside the cockpit. The Hisso in the Spad roared. The tail leaped up from the ground, then the motor was still.

"O.K." called the new pilot. "Take away the blocks."

He waved his hand at the grinning and envious group of replacement pilots gathered near his ship to watch him off.

"Well, here goes," he shouted. "I'll see you all in Berlin."

It was a strange thing. It was as if some grimly humorous fate had reached down into the replacement pool and picked out the one pilot who was as near like the grim Von Honig as two humans can be like one another. Tommy Horn was blond with blue eyes. He was thin lipped and with the chin of a fighter. He was of medium height and weight.

THE OISE RIVER was an easy guide until he came to Noyon. There he had to swing slightly east and fly by map and compass to reach his base. He checked off the towns carefully as he went along. He marveled at the perfectly laid out landscape of France. The sunlight bathed the villages below him, making all the same. He was off his course several times. The shining new Spad nosed this way and that as he busied himself checking off his position every two minutes.

He was still nervous, but the terrible tenseness he had experienced just before his takeoff was gone to a large extent. He was even coming to think that this war flying was not as tough as it was cracked up to be. Maybe the pursuit pilots on the Front made it seem tougher than it was to scare boobs like him, just coming up. After all, it was a pretty good war. The hard training period was over. He never need fear being washed out for a minor infraction of the rules laid down for the conduct of cadets. The green fields of France below him had a restful look—it brought him a sense of freedom, the first he had known since he had entered training at Kelly Field, months—no years ago.

Up ahead of him he saw faintly defined puffs, then a haze of smoke over the horizon. He studied it for a full minute before its importance dawned upon him. Then he knew. It was the Front! The smoke puffs were batteries firing, the smoke pall on the horizon, many batteries in action. He thrilled anew at the nearness of danger, and studied his map carefully. Like every other pilot up for the first time from the pools in the rear, he was afraid of over shooting his own lines.

High above him, in the sun, the D-7 Fokker wheeled in slow circles, its motor at idling speed. All morning Karl Von Honig had been up there—waiting. With infinite patience he watched that horizon to the south for the lone ship he knew would be a replacement pilot going to the Front. Several times during that third morning ships had passed beneath him. Once or twice he had debated in his mind the probable chances of cutting one out and having the thing over with, for his high strung nerves were impatient of delay. But, being German, he waited. Now his prey was below him. He held his hand on the throttle of the gently purring Mercedes, ready to throw it forward and

into the breathless plunge upon the green pilot.

He smiled as he saw the Spad, for all the world like a nervous old woman skirting the edges of a mud puddle. He knew the pilot was nervous and that he was checking in his position. He watched for at least ten minutes, before his eyes gleamed and the throttle was thrust full open.

It was the minute; the minute Karl Von Honig had awaited three days. The minute that would prove whether or not six years of training had been wasted.

Below the two ships was an expanse of thick woods. The terrain was made to order for the purpose the German pilot desired. It would be possible to go down into the woods—to escape detection until the last minute. The flat wires of the Fokker shrieked and moaned under the stress of the power dive. The air speed meter rose and rose, and the wings vibrated and trembled with the terrific force of the slip stream. His eyes were fixed in the circle of his gun sights and his right hand reached for the stick triggers that would set the Spandaus before him into vicious action when the instant arrived.

The pilot in the new Spad seemed unconscious of the swooping menace. He was looking straight ahead, over his motor banks, trying to pick his course. His own motor drowned out the whine of the plunging Fokker. The slip stream in his ears shut out the sound of shrieking flat wires.

The eyes of Karl Von Honig were glowing. He was rigid in his seat. His fingers caressed the triggers of the Spandaus. He waited. His speed was terrific. He glanced down at the ground. He saw a group of running figures emerging from a village a little in the rear. They were troops—Allied troops, he knew. And they were screaming a warning to the unconscious pilot of the Spad. They had made out the iron crosses on the wings of the Fokker, but they were too late. The minute was at hand!

He pushed the nose of the Fokker farther down, then he eased up on the stick. His right hand closed hard over the stick triggers. The Spandaus spat steel and flame just as the nose of the Fokker came in the line with the center of the Spad's cockpit.

The Spad whirled suddenly as a high-spirited horse stung by a hornet. Splinters flew from the shining surfaces. The startled pilot looked back and his face was set in a grin of horror. He twisted madly to escape the flaming Spandaus on his tail. For a moment he was successful. He banked around just as the Fokker plunged by and with an unconscious movement of his hand he tripped the guns before him. The Vickers barked in turn, and the burst combed the fuselage of the diving Fokker. A great flare of triumph welled in the heart of the Spad's pilot. Then he again froze with dread, for the Fokker zoomed up in front of him, went over into a tight loop, and from fifty feet above, poured a new rain of destruction down into the Spad.

THE AILERONS were shot to shreds. The Spad's pilot tried desperately to pull out of the slip into which he had kicked his crate in the attempt to destroy the Fokker's aim, but the Spad went in, down into the woods, crashing through tree branches, breaking off limbs, to rocket into the earth and crumple into a tangled mass of wreckage.

At the same instant the Fokker staggered about and began a slow spin downward. Karl Von Honig was playing his part well. He held his Fokker in the slow spin until he knew that the trees concealed him from the eyes that might be watching from the rear. There was a nasty wound in his neck and blood was seeping down over his chest. The Spad had ripped home one effective burst before it was beaten. He snapped the Fokker out of the spin with barely fifty feet between its landing gear and the trees. He leveled off, then nosed down through the trees, ducking his head under the cockpit.

A succession of terrific shocks jarred him about in the narrow cockpit as the

Fokker settled into the forest. Then his wheels smashed into the ground and the landing gear struts ripped up through the floor boards. He threw off his belt and leaped out of the wreckage. The Spad lay crumpled and torn a hundred feet from where he had washed out the Fokker. He rushed to the side of the cockpit. The Spad's pilot was out—unconscious—dead, perhaps. Karl Von Honig hoped the boy was dead. He was startled at the face. It was so much like his own. He grasped him under the shoulders and heaved him clear of the wreckage. Then, laboriously, he dragged him to the side of the Fokker.

With quick thoroughness he searched the uniform of the Spad's pilot. From his tunic pocket he took a sheaf of orders. Then his hand probed inside the boy's shirt. It emerged clutching a round identification disk. He thrust all the things he had taken from the pilot into his own pocket. He transferred the metallic squadron insignia from the uniform of the Spad's pilot to his own tunic. Then, with the last ounce of his strength, he boosted the still inert boy into the Fokker's ruined cockpit.

He staggered around the nose of the ship. Gasoline was running over everything. The motor base was soaked. The floor boards were oozing gasoline. He regarded the wreck for a moment and then, with great deliberation, lighted a match and tossed it into the wreck.

A great burst of fire roared upward. In a twinkling the entire Fokker was swirling with a flame so hot that Von Honig was forced to cover his face and run for shelter. At the side of the Spad he ripped open the collar of his shirt and transferred the metal indentification disk he had taken from the Spad's pilot to his own neck. He also searched the dispatch compartment in the Spad and drew out a small case which was filled with the trinkets of the dead pilot.

The flame was mounting higher and higher over the Fokker. The hot tongue leaped up higher than the trees. The linen was gone, the longerons were glowing embers. In the cockpit, full in the center of the flaming hell, sat the boy who would never fight again.

At the side of the Spad, Von Honig listened. Over the crackle of flame he could hear hoarse shouts from among the trees. He threw himself into the crumpled cockpit of the Spad, buckled the belt about his waist, and slumped down.

Five minutes later, the searching party from the little village behind the lines found him. They lifted him tenderly and carried him to the village.

CHAPTER II

"LIEUTENANT HORN" JOINS HIS UNIT

THE 69th Pursuit Squadron was in a tight spot. All along the Front things were tightening up in preparation for a push. The 69th knew that the Allied high command had issued the orders for a determined drive against the enemy position before Chauny. In the rear, troops were concentrating for the drive forward. Fresh divisions came up to take over front lines from war weary men who were haggard and filthy from weeks in and out of the trenches.

Artillery concentrations were being made behind Verlains, where the 69th's field was located. Day after day fresh orders arrived which caused Major Barnes new worries. Monotonously the messages repeated:

"You must keep the enemy out of the air in the Chauny sector. It is imperative that our troop movements be masked. No matter at what cost, keep the air out of the enemy's hands."

Day after day the 69th threw its weight against a sky teeming with enemy ships. Day after day battered Spads reeled back on the home field to permit grim pilots to crawl out of splintered cockpits and snatch an hour's sleep against the coming of the next alarm. Day after day fresh pilots came up from the replacement pools to take the place of the veterans of the 69th, who had gone over that far horizon from which there is no returning.

The 69th was growling in its throat. The 69th had been hurt and stung by losses. Familiar faces that had once smiled over mess tables were gone, and the going left a void in the hearts and minds of those veterans who were left to the squadron.

And then, there was another queer feeling in the hearts of the pilots. They felt that no matter how they struggled; no matter what price they paid; no matter how great their toil—the enemy was laughing at them. There was no reason that any of them should feel that way. Yet, it always seemed that the enemy understood the 69th was bearing the brunt of keeping the air clean in the Chauny sector, and that the enemy was intent upon beating against the resistance of that superb fighting squadron until they were no longer a factor of defense.

There was one bright spot in the recent history of the squadron. It was the day on which Lieutenant Tommy Horn had come up from the hospital, after his battle with the Fokker which had waylaid him on his way from the replacement pool to the field.

The 69th felt that slip sharply. To think that an enemy could slip over the lines, unperceived, lie in wait for a green pilot, and then with magnificent daring, swoop down upon that pilot, while still miles within Allied territory, and be balked in his design only by the courage of the green pilot.

The 69th gave Tommy Horn a warm welcome upon his arrival. He was still swathed in bandages. He had little to say. He seemed ashamed of the fact that he had lost his first ship. But the men of the 69th knew that any ship, surprised in such a manner, would have been lost. They felt it a good omen that a green pilot, uninstructed in the ways of actual combat, should have had the nerve to fight back against a trained, alert enemy, and against great odds, bring that enemy down with him.

Even though the ship was lost, the fact remained that Tommy Horn still lived, the enemy pilot was dead and the Fokker a mass of charred embers. So they gave Karl Von Honig a warm welcome and made him one of them. As the days went by their admiration increased. The green youngster could fly. He could fly like a veteran. Of course, he made certain errors and they sometimes laughed at him, but there was no question as to his nerve and daring. He was always in the forefront of every battle, and twice he had rushed in to pick a vicious enemy off the tail of Buzz Whitaker, the Squadron flight commander. Both times his target had escaped him, but his rush had been so headlong, that he gained the time necessary for Buzz to extricate himself from tight places and to finish the job young Horn had started.

The pilots of the 69th did not know that Karl Von Honig was playing his part perfectly. They did not know that he was making errors in flight to conceal his mastery of the craft. They did not know that on both occasions when he brushed Fokkers off Buzz Whitaker's tail, that the Fokkers would have been easy prey for Karl Von Honig, had he not deliberately placed his bursts through the wings of the enemy ships rather than through the cockpit, or some other vital place.

And in spite of the labors of the squadron, the enemy swarmed about them every time up. It became more and more difficult to secure information. It seemed that each time 69 went off the ground, a cloud of Avatiks, or Hals, or Fokkers rose up before them, and there was a dog fight and losses, without attaining the object of the mission.

THE 69TH did not know that among them they held the cause of the stubborn resistance on the part of the enemy. Upon the second day with the squadron, Von Honig had dropped his message behind the enemy lines. He had become separated for ten minutes from the remainder of the 69th. He had drifted far to the north, until he spotted a German flying field on the ground. He was cautious. He knew that a small,

weighted parcel would drop from his own plane to the ground without detection. He had the parcel ready. It was weighted with half a dozen machine gun shells. His message was brief:

> Concentrate on the 69th Squadron. This squadron is defending Verlains. I am quite all right. Tell Von Seyfritz not to run the next time I get on his tail. I am painting a red nose on my Spad so that you will know it. Be sure to have the next ship I attack whirl down in a manner to represent out of control. It will help me. Watch for my ship—a red nosed Spad with white wings. If you see it, be careful. I am in it. No opportunity as yet to be free behind the lines. Will drop further information soon—same place.
>
> —VON HONIG

And so, the German air knew that Karl Von Honig had carried out his daring plan and was an accepted member of an American squadron. The order went around the German fields to watch out for a Spad with white wings and a red nose.

During the next week, Tommy Horn drew his first blood with the 69th. They had spoofed him a little on the ambitious color scheme of his crate, but Von Honig, in the rôle of Tommy Horn, smiled his quiet, thin lipped smile, and in his heart laughed at them. He went on painting the nose of the Spad a bright red, and the wings a brilliant white.

"You'll make one sweet target out of yourself with a layout like that," warned Buzz Whitaker, when the paint job was finished. "They'll be chasing you all over the sky trying to find out what the circus is all about. Me, I stick to the regulation gray."

"Well, I hope they find out what the circus is about," smiled Von Honig. "The real reason for doing this job is so I won't get lost from you birds. I had heart failure the last time. Now maybe you'll be able to pick me out of a bunch and lead me home."

There was a mocking light in his blue eyes. Whitaker experienced a shudder along his spine as he looked into those eyes. They reminded him of a steel trap.

They had good reason to watch the red nosed Spad on the next time up. Von Honig flew it like a demon. They met an escorting squadron of Fokkers playing nursemaid to a lumbering group of photographic crates. With a wild whoop of motors, 69 went down to teach the two seaters better manners. The speedy Spads dived under the Fokker escort. Buzz Whitaker was in the van. He was lining the first of the two seaters in his gun sights when a red nosed comet flashed by him, standing up on its prop, with its guns vomiting a vivid red hell. The two seater seemed to go out of control. It slipped far over on one wing, and started a slow spin for the ground. The red nosed Spad flashed back over it a second time, and again Whitaker saw the muzzles of the Vickers in front of Tommy Horn obscured by the red flare. This time the observation ship plunged down, wings gyrating wildly. It disappeared into a cloud bank at the five thousand foot level, and in his mind Whitaker gave Horn credit for his first victory.

The flight commander was a trifle peeved. The green pilot had no business cutting in front of him in that manner. It might have meant a bad collision—but the thing was done. He did not know that Von Honig had deliberately dashed in to take the battle out of Whitaker's hands. Dashed in to save the two seater. He knew the sight of the red nosed and white winged Spad would send the two seater down quicker than any bullet. Von Honig was smiling grimly as he banked over and hurled his crate back into the conflict.

THREE more ships fell to the bag of Tommy Horn that day. The 69th Pursuit Squadron marveled at his daring tactics. It seemed that his guns were inspired and that the red nosed Spad was everywhere. But in spite of the frantic efforts of Von Honig, the 69th was not prevented from taking a real toll of the enemy. There was no doubt as to the condition of the three ships which fell to Whitaker,

Hasbrouck and young Jimmy Eidel. Those three went down in flames. They were counted out. They did not fall out of control, perhaps to fight another day.

The squadron was loud in praise of Tommy Horn's flying that night. They slapped him on the back and told him just how good they thought he was. He smiled at them, and again that mocking little devil was in his eyes.

Bus Hasbrouck studied the young pilot through narrowed eyes. He offered his hand in congratulation along with the rest. He also was conscious of that light of mockery in Von Honig's eyes. He was fighting to restrain a feeling of dislike. He charged himself with being jealous of a kid who could knock down three of the enemy while he was getting but one. Yet, the more he studied the newcomer, the more certain he became that there was something queer about him.

He was delving into his memory for a forgotten episode of the past. Somehow these blue eyes and that cruel, fighting mouth and jaw were familiar to him. Somewhere he had seen that face and those eyes—but he shook his head with a baffled expression.

"Well, you sure showed us up today, Tommy," he told Von Honig. "That was a peach of an exhibition you put up. Whoever taught you to fly sure did a good job of it."

Von Honig smiled.

"Thanks," he said warmly. "You didn't do so bad yourself. I saw you smack the Fokker for a loop. It was a sweet piece of flying. You're right. The bird who taught me to fly knew his stuff—lots better than the average American flying field instructor."

The manner in which it was said caused a feeling of dislike to engulf Bus Hasbrouck again. Again the memory of that face came into his mind.

"You got yours at Kelly, didn't you?" he asked.

"Sure, all good little keydets come from Kelly and go to heaven," laughed Von Honig. "I'm just one of the lucky ones. I haven't gone yet."

"Well, it was a nice exhibition," repeated Bus lamely. "You'll be the talk of the Front if you keep that sort of thing up."

"It seems that I have swell chances for notoriety, anyway," remarked Von Honig. "First I get smacked down by a Fokker miles inside our lines; and then I push three over in one day, just to get even— Oh, well, such is fame, I guess."

The group about Von Honig broke up. Bus Hasbrouck stood looking after the straight back and blond head of the newcomer as he strode away to his tent. Then Hasbrouck strolled off in the direction of the operations tent. He was puffing thoughtfully on a cigaret. Within the tent he found Buzz Whitaker seated at his crazy desk, poring over a group of maps.

CHAPTER III

BUS HASBROUCK TILTS AT WINDMILLS

"COME on out into the air, I want to talk to you," invited Bus.

Whitaker looked up in surprise.

"Shoot. What's the matter with this place?" he asked.

"Private conversation intended for your little pink ear only," grinned Hasbrouck. "I crave the wide open spaces under the sun so that if you decided I'm crazy after I get through talking, why, I'll have plenty of space to run in. Come on, it's important."

Whitaker picked up his cap and followed the sauntering Hasbrouck. Arm in arm they wandered down the road toward the little village of Verlains. They seemed to be walking aimlessly, bent upon a visit to the little *estaminet* in the village, but Buster Hasbrouck's hand was tense on Whitaker's arm and his voice was serious as he spoke in a tone that carried only as far as Buzz's ear.

"Buzz," asked Hasbrouck, "did you ever see one of our guys, flying any of our ships, ever attempt one of those sharp climbing, banking turns that are common with the Jerries?"

Whitaker glanced at Hasbrouck out of the corner of his eye.

"What do you mean, climbing turns?" he asked.

"I mean that straight up, twisting turn that the German pilots use when they climb and turn on a dime, all at the same time. You know a Fokker and an Albatross can do that little stunt in great shape, but a Camel, or a Nieuport or a Spad can't do it, so our boys never try it. Did you ever notice one of our fellows try that maneuver in combat?"

Whitaker shook his head.

"Can't say that I ever did. I know a Spad won't do it, and it gives Jerry a big advantage in getting back into position after he overshoots a target, or in shaking off a ship on his tail. How come you ask such a question?"

"Well, for the first time in my experience, I saw an American pilot try that stunt today—a boy out of our own outfit—and he flubbed it because the crate wouldn't do the stunt. What do you think of that?"

"You're crazy," laughed the flight commander. "There isn't a boy in the 69th that would try that climbing turn. They all know it won't work."

"Nevertheless, one did. And besides that, the thing that got me was the way he did it. Seemed to me that he forgot for a second that he was flying a Spad, and in his excitement, threw the crate into something he was used to doing as a matter of course. The result was that the Spad went into a dizzy power spin. Then about five minutes afterward, he tried the thing again, going up to get under that Fokker's tail that you shot down. The same thing happened."

"Well," demanded Whitaker densely, "what's wrong in trying things?"

"Nothing, only it don't seem right that one of our guys should try that stunt. I never saw a Kelly Field product in my life that had a remote idea how to handle a crate in that kind of a turn. They just don't know it exists. And yet, our Jerry friends, because they have Fokkers and Albatrosses and Mercedes motors in them, can swing through that funny maneuver like a snake. I never have seen an Allied pilot do it, and it's common with the enemy. That's what made me ask you about it."

"Who was the fellow who did it?" asked Whitaker.

Hasbrouck was silent for a long minute.

"Horn," he said at last. "Horn, the boy that is making a hero of himself. The guy that knocked down three crates this afternoon. The fellow with the icy smile and the blue eyes."

Whitaker snorted.

"Hell, you're just jealous," he laughed. "That boy is going to click wherever he finds himself."

"Maybe he has clicked before?" suggested Hasbrouck.

Whitaker stopped dead in the roadway.

"Get it off your chest," he snarled. "What the hell are you talking about anyway."

"Well, don't get peeved," smiled Hasbrouck. "I'm only thinking. Listen, Buzz, you know I'm a squarehead myself. My people are all German. I was educated in America. Yet I think like a Jerry. I guess I always will. I'm scrapping over here on our side because I hate the military caste in Germany like hell. Maybe you didn't know that, but I was born in Germany, speak the language like a native, and never saw the United States until I was sixteen years old.

"Somehow I've always had a brain that could think things out. I've been doing a lot of it lately. When things don't run true to form I have to find a reason or I can't sleep at night. Now take the case of Tommy Horn. He doesn't run true to form. You see, I wrote a letter to a guy I knew back in the replacement pool—Billy Doakes. I asked him for a line on Tommy Horn. Made him believe that we were getting ready to pull a fast one on him. Well, Billy wrote me back that Horn had blue eyes, blond hair, small mouth, was of medium height and weight, and a fair pilot. Mind now, a fair pilot—not a whirlwind.

"I WROTE that letter after Horn showed up on the field and after he had taken two Jerries off your tail in as many days. Now you ask, what made me write the letter? This made me write it: Whoever heard of a Fokker twenty miles inside of Allied territory jumping down on the tail of a green pilot and shooting him down? Why take a chance for the sake of one ship, when there are easier pickings nearer the Front?

"If that Fokker was back there it was there for a purpose. What was the purpose? What else could it be but to shoot down a green pilot? None of our crates ever drift back there. There isn't anything that far back that the Jerries want to know, is there? They are interested in our front lines—up where the action is.

"O.K. If the Fokker was back there it accomplished its purpose. It shot down an Allied pilot going up to the Front to join a squadron he had never seen and to be among fellows he did not know. But the Fokker was shot down also. Perhaps that was part of the scheme."

Whitaker was listening with wide eyes.

"But you just said that the bird who answered your letter from back there at the pool admitted that Horn had blue eyes and blond hair," he protested.

Hasbrouck nodded shortly.

"That's the rub," he admitted. "But so have thirty million Germans blue eyes and blond hair. We know that a Spad and a Fokker were side by side. We know that the Fokker burned up, and we know that they found the body of a man in the cockpit of the Fokker and that he was burned to a crisp. Still, we don't know who the man was who burned up, or what he looked like. We know that a couple days after that, Tommy Horn came on our field with his head in bandages. We accepted him as the pilot of the Spad and an American officer, but have we proof that he really is?"

Whitaker smiled.

"Of course we have," he assured. "Didn't he bring his service records with him, his orders and all his knicknacks saved from the wreck of the Spad?"

"Yeah," he brought all of those things all right, admitted Hasbrouck, "but don't forget I'm a German and I can find reasons for everything.

"How do you like this? Now mind, I'm only giving you a story. I'm not saying it's a fact, but here are my suspicions—remember a climbing turn, when no Allied pilot does it. Remember a whirlwind pilot when Billy Doakes back at the replacement pool said that he was only a fair pilot. Remember a fair pilot rushing in and taking two Jerries off your tail on his first time up, with a beautiful exhibition of plain and fancy flying. And above all, for Pete's sake, remember that this boy handles himself like a veteran, looks like a veteran, and yet should only be fresh from Kelly, and as green as hell. Remember those things and listen.

"Suppose I was a Jerry commander and I wanted quick information about this push that's due to be sent against them? I'd pick out one of my men who spoke perfect English, and I'd set him to watch a replacement pool for pursuit pilots. I'd have him get twenty thousand feet altitude, then head out into enemy territory for the purpose of cruising around and keeping watch on that pool. Then, when I'd caught a green pilot going up to the Front, I'd dive on to the poor devil's tail, knowing in advance that he'd be considering himself safe all the time, and I'd act as if I were badly hurt in the fight. When I got to the ground, I'd know that I'd have at least five minutes to work before anybody found the wrecked crates. Suppose I was wearing an American uniform—all ready to make the change? And suppose as soon as I hit the ground I went over and dragged the green pilot out of his crate and over to mine. Suppose I went through his pockets and took his papers and his identification tag and put them in my own pockets and around my own neck? Suppose then, that I boosted this poor guy up into my wrecked crate, and set the whole works afire? Suppose that I went back and crawled into the cockpit of the Spad and pretended to be

unconscious when the ground troops came running up and found us?

"Well, there I am, all nicely strapped in the Spad, and the poor bird that started out in the Spad is roasting in the Fokker. What would happen? Easy! I'd be taken to the hospital and made a hero of. A guy who dropped a Fokker his first time up after having been surprised by the Fokker in a place no Fokker should be. Would people suspect me? Hardly. They found me in the right cockpit, out cold, just like when I hit the ground, with a wound in the neck. There you are. I'd be returned to duty, and sent up to my outfit. When I got up there the boys would be so excited about a green boy knocking down a Fokker that they'd never think to ask a question —just like we did.

"Now consider it. Wouldn't I have a swell chance to tip off the boy friends across the Rhine as to the state of things on this side of the lines? Wouldn't it be a lead pipe cinch?"

Whitaker's face was white.

"You sure paint a sweet picture," he said in a husky tone. "But you left one thing out. Suppose when the fellow in the Fokker landed, the green pilot from the replacement camp wasn't dead?"

THERE was another pause from Hasbrouck.

"I know the Heinies," he said tensely. "If the boy wasn't dead, why the game was big enough to bump him off and load him into the cockpit anyhow. Worse things have happened."

Whitaker shook his head.

"I think you're having a nightmare, wide awake," he told Hasbrouck. "Better forget it. For God's sake, don't say anything about this to any one else, will you?"

Hasbrouck shook his head.

"I won't," he promised. "If you can't see it the way I do, no one can see it. I'm mum. But believe me, wherever Tommy Horn goes, if he is Tommy Horn, Bus Hasbrouck is going to be right behind him until Bus Hasbrouck knows him to be Tommy Horn for a fact, and not just accepted as Tommy Horn. I can't forget that I'm a squarehead. I can't forget that a fair pilot don't turn into a star performer over night, and I can't forget that Allied pilots don't attempt Jerry climbing turns—and that's that!

"One thing I have to hand to that bird. If he is a Jerry passing himself as Tommy Horn, and I can't prove that he is, he has plenty of guts and he's plenty dangerous. He hasn't made a single bad move until he tried that climbing turn in a Spad. But that one slip set me to thinking. That one slip—and the way he came to us."

"Well, if it does you any good to go tagging Tommy Horn around, why, tail after him," laughed Whitaker. "You remind me of that guy who used to go out fighting windmills in his knight clothes down in Spain.

Hasbrouck grinned good naturedly but there was a glint in his eye.

"Well, anyhow, that guy down in Spain didn't go round tilting at windmills in a red nosed Spad with white wings, did he? Why is it that all of the boys in the outfit are satisfied with the regulation gray Spad, but our boy friend has to doll up his crate with a red nose and white wings?"

"Publicity stunt, I guess," laughed Whitaker.

"Oh, yeah?" countered Hasbrouck. "Well, that's always suicide in this man's war in the air. One thing a guy don't want is to make himself conspicuous. Some Jerry is likely to think he amounts to something and try extra hard to knock him down, just because he's different from the rest of the gang. Why should Tommy Horn take a chance like that?"

"I'll bite, why should he?" questioned Buzz.

"I could give a reason, but I won't. You'd say it is some more of the same pipe dream."

"Go ahead, don't mind me," said Whitaker. "I like entertainment."

"Well," stated Hasbrouck in desper-

ation, "it could be because he *wanted* the Jerry pilots to know who he was. It could be that they were supposed to leave that red nosed crate alone—if the line I've thought out is worth anything."

Whitaker permitted the smile to slip off his face.

"Oh, hell, Bus," he said testily. "You've got the spy bug on the brain. Forget it. You're giving me the willies. The first thing you know I'll be pussyfooting around watching Tommy Horn—and waiting for him to sell out. Forget it."

Hasbrouck was silent until they reached the *estaminet*.

"O.K. That's the last you'll hear from me on the subject—but I'll not forget it. Remember, I'm a squarehead myself, and even after the years I've been in America, I think differently from you birds. I'm just as good an American at heart as anybody in the squadron, and I've proved it, but I can't help it if my brain makes me fit pieces together until I get a whole picture straight. In this case I've got the parts—I haven't got a straight picture—but I won't sleep nights until I do get it. Let's have a drink."

CHAPTER IV

A FOOTBALL GAME

SOME wise prophet of Mars, in drawing up the rules and regulations of modern warfare, decreed that fighting men must play as well as fight. The prophet responsible for the decree was wise in the ways of men. His psychology was proven by the manner in which tired, red eyed warriors, surfeited with the horrors of fighting for a mean existence, threw aside the cares of countless days and with grim, and sometimes laughable ardor, played the games of their lighter days. One of them was football.

The 69th Squadron was no exception to the rule. They loved to play football. It mattered nothing that they were so tired that they were unable to sleep nights. It mattered nothing that after the game they would be forced to take the air again. Between games some of the regulars were always thrown for a loss in the grimmer game of keeping the skies clean of Boche planes, but the 69th always found enough men to represent it, and the 69th played a hard, fast, clean game of football.

Even now, with plans for the push so materialized that the squadron was struggling to sweep every enemy eye out of the heavens, football was about to be played. The 69th was lined up against the 14th Observation Squadron. Until this moment the 69th had not tasted defeat. Neither had the 14th Observation. It was to be a game for blood.

Many a varsity team has faced a hated rival with poorer material than constituted the teams of the 69th and 14th. Both clubs, with but few exceptions, were composed of college men, all ex-gridiron warriors. In the backfield of the 69th, Whitaker played quarter, Bus Hasbrouck left half, Eddie Murphy, just three years out of school after being rated All American in his position, played right half, and wonder of wonders, Karl Von Honig alias Tommy Horn, was fullback.

It was not Karl Von Honig's first game of football by any means. Back in the States, during his college life, football as played by the American teams was his favorite sport. He had been a varsity back throughout his sophomore, junior and senior years. Many men who had played against Karl Von Honig would have remembered him. Once he had been a weaving, flashing, hard hitting back, with an uncanny way of leaping high into the air and snaring passes which to an ordinary back would have been out of reach.

He was playing now because Whitaker had asked him. He had consented reluctantly. It had given him food for deep thought. Still, not to play, would have been more suspicious, so he was in the 69th's backfield, his superb body encased in familiar moleskins and his ears

eager for the *pung* of foot against ball on the kickoff. He thrilled at the thought of hugging the oval to his breast and battering his way through a wall of living flesh. One thing he much regretted. There was no football in Germany.

Buzz Whitaker raised his hand. It was the signal.

"Ready 14th?" called the referee. "Ready 69th?"

The referee dropped his hand. Bus Hasbrouck trotted forward, his eye upon the ball. His foot swung through a short arc, there came the dull sound of toe against leather, the ball flew straight and high to the 14th Squadron's five yard line. A back leaped into the air, hugged the ball tight, landed on his feet with the sureness of a cat, and plunged ahead.

He made exactly four yards, then Murphy nailed him with a knee high tackle that smeared the runner in his tracks.

They were lined up before the echo of the whistle was still. There was a brief huddle. Back to places. A pause. The ball snapped back, a quick thrust through tackle. The 69th's line held. Again the huddle. Another off tackle smash. Two yards. A conference. The 69th Squadron's safety man dropped back. The center snapped the ball. The kicker's foot flashed. The punt traveled forty-five yards and settled down into the waiting arms of Karl Von Honig. The ends were down on him almost before he had the ball. Out of the corner of his eye he marked them. As he made the catch, the first of them lunged in for him. Von Honig leaped high over the grasping arms, sidestepped with the quickness of light, shook off two other tacklers and was away.

The first white chalk line passed under his feet. He was fast as a sprinter. Desperately the 14th's line tried to break up the 69th's interference. They took out man after man. The last to be bowled over was Bus Hasbrouck. Then the 14th's crack quarterback threw Von Honig. It was fast action, yet Von Honig had reeled off twenty yards before they spilled him.

THE 69th lined up. Whitaker barked the signals. Hasbrouck's call to smash right tackle. He hit hard, but the line before him held—there was no hole. Again Hasbrouck went against right tackle. No gain. Whitaker called on Tommy Horn for a try around right end. Von Honig, leaping in, got away to a good start, but the 14th's secondary defense stopped him before he could cut in. It was fourth down and ten to go.

Hasbrouck dropped back. He punted far down the field—to the 14th's five yard line. They stopped the receiver in his tracks.

And so it went through three hectic periods. Line plunge and smash, skirting the ends, no gain, then punt, each team playing for the break which did not come.

During the half, Bus Hasbrouck had seated himself at the edge of the field. He was watching Von Honig out of the corner of his eye. He was fighting to recall Von Honig's face. He knew that somewhere, sometime, he had seen this man who called himself Tommy Horn. The conviction became stronger each minute out there on the football field. He raged within himself at the faulty memory that would not bring the circumstances of that meeting back to his mind. He knew that at that last meeting the man's name had not been Tommy Horn. He was sure of that. All through the third and fourth periods he watched Von Honig. He was guilty of several lapses during those fierce minutes of play, as he gave his attention more to Von Honig's face than to the hard fought game. Buzz Whitaker had bawled him out twice for missing his signal.

Then Bus Hasbrouck placed the face of Karl Von Honig. It came to him in a flash. Just as he had noticed the climbing turn, which no Allied pilot ever attempted.

There were four minutes to go in the

final quarter. The score was nothing to nothing. Until this moment Buzz Whitaker had not resorted to the air in an attempt to score. The 14th squadron had heaved several passes, but each time, the alert secondary defense of the pursuit group had batted them down. Now Whitaker was low behind the center.

He looked around at his backfield.

"33-3-4-9-11-41," he barked.

Bus Hasbrouck dropped back fifteen feet. It was his signal to toss a forward, either to the right or left halfback, or to any eligible man that happened to be clear if the backs were covered. He stood as if about to kick. It was third down. They were on the 14th's forty yard line.

"Hep!" barked Whitaker, and dropped back to give the thrower interference.

The ball snapped back from the center shoulder high. It was a perfect pass. Bus snatched it and covered five yards to his right. He was looking around as he ran. He could see Eddie Murphy tearing toward the sidelines on the right side of the field. Three men were on him. Both ends were blocked in. Von Honig was going down the field. He was crossing the twenty yard line when he looked around. There were two of the opposing team covering him. The 14th's line was through. The center charged Bus. Coolly, Hasbrouck heaved the ball. It went down the field in a straight line, spinning like a shell from a gun. It was over Von Honig's head. Bus groaned as he watched the flight of the ball. Von Honig, his back to the ball, was tearing forward with three of the enemy ploughing after him. Then Buzz Whitaker screamed aloud and pounded on the ground.

With a magnificent upward leap, twisting his body around while he was in the air, Von Honig snatched the ball while it was still over his head, regained his footing, sidestepped the first tackler, and crossed the last chalkline between himself and a touchdown.

The 14th's quarter tackled him on the fly just as Von Honig stepped over the line. The score, 69th Pursuit Squadron, 6; 14th Observation, 0.

On the march down the field, Bus Hasbrouck walked like a man in a trance. His lips were moving and he was muttering to himself. His eyes never left the face of Von Honig. Once, Von Honig turned and the smile on his flushed face turned to a grimace of alarm as he looked into Bus's eyes. That look of Bus's caused him to shiver. He regretted that leaping, twisting catch. He watched Hasbrouck's face covertly. He cursed himself for a fool to have played.

The teams lined up. There was a minute to go. The 69th was trying for point. Buzz Whitaker held the ball. The whistle blew and the 14th charged forward. Hasbrouck made a miserable attempt. His mind was not on the ball at his feet. He was thinking of another football game, years ago. How many? Five at least.

TWO FAMOUS universities faced each other in a great stadium. One school from the East, the other from the Middle West. On the team from the West, Bus Hasbrouck played left halfback, just as he was playing today. In that game the score had been nothing to nothing until the last period, just as it had been in this Service game. And then there had been a forward pass thrown. A flying back, far down the field had leaped into the air and snared the ball, to fall across the goal line, just as Bus Hasbrouck had smashed the opposing back to earth. That wonderful, leaping, twisting catch of ball, thrown high over the receiver's head, had lost the game for Bus's Alma Mater, but he had congratulated the man who had won the game, in spite of the sting of defeat. In his ears he could still hear the cheering section of the Eastern university.

"Von Honig!"

It had been in the scramble of that game that Bus Hasbrouck had seen Von Honig's face. Never before, or since.

And now, in another football game, and under the same circumstances, he recognized him.

"How in hell did you miss that try," wailed Buzz Whitaker.

Von Honig was studying Bus Hasbrouck's face. He was smiling quietly, but inwardly he was tense as a violin string.

"I was still cuckoo from that beautiful catch of Horn's," mumbled Bus. "I never thought he had a chance to get it. It looked a mile over his head. It was the sweetest catch I ever saw. I was half groggy from smacking the line the last time—hit my head on some guy's hip—and it knocked me woozy."

Whitaker grinned.

"Well, I guess that settled the argument as to who has the best football team," he chortled.

He turned to accept the congratulations of the captain of the 14th's team.

"Wonderful game," said that worthy, gamely trying to hide his chagrin with a smile.

"Thanks, we were lucky to win," smiled Whitaker.

"That catch of Horn's was the luckiest thing I ever saw," said the 14th's captain.

Von Honig stared at him.

"Perhaps it wasn't luck," he said in his cold voice.

"Well, in a way it was lucky," stated Hasbrouck, wiping the mud off his face. "It was lucky for me. I'd have been in line for one sweet bawling out if that toss had gone wrong. See you birds later."

Of course the 69th threw a wild binge that night. Such a victory deserved a celebration of some sort. The 69th knew only one kind of a celebration, only one kind was possible, so the little *estaminet* in Verlaines was host to the victors and vanquished, and corks popped like machine guns far into the night.

On one thing they all agreed. Tommy Horn was not only one hot pilot, but he was a damn' fine fellow and the greatest footballer in the A.E.F.

CHAPTER V

BUS HASBROUCK HAS A PLAN

BUS HASBROUCK left the party early. There was a great burst of laughter as he announced his intention of turning in.

"Bah!" yelled the gang. "Don't admit that those goofs from the 14th bunged you up so bad that you've got to get to rest. Think of the honor of the squadron."

"You think of it," grinned Bus. "I'm going into the hay."

Von Honig stretched his arms with an easy indifference.

"Guess I'll go too," he announced. "Bus's example is a good one."

Out in the darkness of the night, Von Honig fell into step beside Bus.

"I'll walk back with you if you don't mind," he said.

"Not at all; glad to have you, Tommy," answered Bus. Hasbrouck was trying to solve Von Honig's game.

"Sweet football game we had today," commented the German.

Bus nodded his head.

"You know, I love to play football," he said. "I've loved it ever since I was a kid."

"Ever play college football?" asked Von Honig.

Bus tried to see his eyes in the darkness, but he could perceive nothing but the glowing tip of his companion's cigaret. He knew the intent of that question. Von Honig was disturbed.

"No," laughed Hasbrouck. "It was sure easy to see that today. You made me and everybody else look like selling platers. When I was in school I played on a class team. I went out for the varsity. I never thought I had much chance. You must have been a star on your college team."

"Never played football at school," declared Von Honig. "Went to a little jerkwater joint in the Middle West; we didn't have a regular football team."

"Well," smiled Bus. "Some big school sure lost a star when you decided to go to the jerkwater institution. You mean to

tell me that you never played football before?"

"Oh, no," answered Von Honig quickly. "I played all right, but never in the big time, like you boys who played at school. I played with the town team and all that when I was home, but I never had a chance to be coached on the fine points."

"Well, all I have to say is, God help football if you had ever been coached," said Bus. "I never saw a more finished product than you seem to be."

"Ever see any of the big games between Pennsylvania and Michigan?" asked Von Honig.

Hasbrouck's heart leaped wildly. For a moment he was silent. The fellow was daring to the point of suicide. He was bringing things to a crisis with his cool questions. Did he know that Hasbrouck had been a varsity back for Michigan, and did he know that Hasbrouck recognized him as Von Honig, Penn's star fullback? He determined to take a chance.

"No," he said. "I never was lucky enough to see a Michigan-Pennsylvania game. I remember one time when Penn stopped Michigan in the last period with a forward pass. Ann Arbor's first defeat in two years. I had no chance to see that game, though; I was too busy."

Von Honig took a long puff on his cigaret. It seemed to Bus that he heaved a sigh of relief. They were coming into the field. There was a light in Buzz Whitaker's tent.

"Poor guy," sympathized Von Honig. "No fun for him. He has to stick over his damn' maps every minute he's on the ground."

Hasbrouck nodded.

"Tough life," he admitted. "Guess I'll go in and kid him on missing the binge. Coming along?"

"No," declared Von Honig. "I'm done up. Football takes a lot out of me. I'm going to turn in."

Hasbrouck watched the glow of Von Honig's cigaret until it was lost in the darkness. Then he turned and entered the operations tent.

He looked down at the laboring Whitaker, eyes burning with the force of his emotions.

"Listen," he whispered hoarsely. "I've got to talk to you—now, right away—not here. Look, I'll go outside after a minute or two and light a cigaret. You follow after me and keep my cigaret in sight. When we get to a safe place to talk I'll spill you a yarn that will knock your ears off."

"More spy stuff?" grinned Whitaker.

Bus Hasbrouck went rigid. His face was white and white spots showed over the knuckles of his hand resting on the desk.

"LISTEN, Buzz," he said in a tense whisper. "You're my best buddy, but if you don't listen to me and act I'll have to go over your head to get action. If I do, and I'm right, hell will pop, and you will be the big goat. Now forget the amusement stuff, and pay attention. When I get out of here you follow after me, and take care that you're not followed. This is not a laughing matter; this is life and death—thousands of lives and thousands of deaths."

There was not a smile on Buzz Whitaker's face as he gave his answer. He realized that Bus Hasbrouck was in deadly earnest. Ever since the first conversation having to do with Tommy Horn, the 69th's commander had felt a gnawing suspicion at work within him. There had been a doubt raised by Hasbrouck's "trying to fit together the pieces to make a straight picture". In the night, Buzz Whitaker had awakened in a cold sweat, thinking of what the consequences would be if by any wild chance, Bus was right. He admitted to himself that all of the "pieces" concerning Tommy Horn were not ready to be fitted into a complete picture.

"I'll come," he promised Bus. "Stick around for a minute until I finish these orders and I'll follow after you."

Bus threw himself upon Whittaker's cot and stared at the tent wall. He was thinking of a running, leaping, twisting

catch, and of a twisting, climbing, banking turn; a turn that was only attempted by Fokkers and Albatrosses with Mercedes motors, and a style of catch that had only been attempted by Karl Von Honig.

Whitaker rolled his maps and placed them under his pillow.

"OK," he whispered. "Any time you're ready."

Hasbrouck walked out through the tent door and lighted a cigaret. Then he sauntered away in the direction of the tent hangars. Fifty paces behind, Buzz Whitaker followed. In spite of his laughing protests, there was a chill up and down his spine, and he was nervous as a cat, expecting every moment a shape to leap out of the darkness. He peered about him cautiously to be sure that he was not followed.

Hasbrouck turned into the spare parts tent. He seated himself in the center of the floor.

"Now," he warned Buzz, "you listen. I told you I wouldn't have anything more to say about this, but I didn't promise not to do any more thinking about it. I told you I had seen this bird Tommy Horn somewhere before, and that his name wasn't Tommy Horn. Well, today I found out who he is. It came to me like a flash. All afternoon, while I was playing such dumb football, I was watching this guy and trying to remember where I saw him.

"Now you and I both know that I was a varsity back for Michigan. Well, the boy that is taking Tommy Horn's place was a varsity back for Pennsylvania. I played against him. I know him because he beat us the only game we lost while I was varsity.

"I wasn't sure until I saw him leap up in the air this afternoon and take that pass over his shoulder and go on for a touchdown. Then I knew him. With that very same play he broke Michigan's heart in the Penn-Michigan game in 1913, and scored the only touchdown of the game. The minute I saw him go up after that pass and twist around as he went, I knew him. Buzz, that guy's name is Von Honig! I'd know him among a million. I tackled him after he caught the ball that beat us. There is no mistake about it, the guy is Von Honig—and he's a squarehead. If you don't think a guy named Von Honig was a star for Penn, look him up in the records; he left plenty of them."

Buzz Whitaker's face was strained and white.

"Are you sure of this?" he whispered.

"Would I make such a charge if I wasn't. And besides, tonight coming home from the binge, he kind of sounded me out as to whether or not I had ever played college football, and whether I had ever seen any Penn-Michigan games. He's leery of me, I guess. He feels that I don't like him. Maybe he saw me watching him once or twice. Anyway, he's not Tommy Horn. He's Von Honig—and he is a squarehead."

"My God," muttered Whitaker hoarsely. "What can we do about it? He's ruined us."

"Maybe he thinks he has," said Bus through set teeth. "If he had, it would be a chump's move to tip our hands now. The thing we must do is watch him like a hawk. Then, on the Q.T. you must get the information to headquarters that all of the troop movements up to now have been tipped off, and that the enemy is in possession of all the facts having to do with our preparations—or at least all that has been talked about them inside our own outfit.

"You'll have to tell the big guys that they'll have to draw up a new set of plans to spring on the Boche. Then, we'll encourage Von Honig's friends to follow our phony information. They'll believe that Von Honig is giving them the stuff straight and they'll never suspect that they are being doublecrossed. Get me?"

"I get you all right," answered Whitaker in a nervous voice, "but the fact still remains this. I just can't go to headquarters with this plan until I have proof positive that this man who says he is Tommy

Horn is not Tommy Horn. They don't know him well enough at the replacement pool to be sure one way or the other. The breaks have all been with the Jerries, if they did pull a fast one like you claim. Tommy Horn was in the pool three days when he was shipped up to us. I'll stake my neck that if the boys from the replacement pool were to look at this bird you claim is Von Honig, they would say right off that he was Tommy Horn and give you the horse laugh. I'll have to have proof. Definite proof."

"Well, if the Jerries accept Tommy Horn as Karl Von Honig, will that be proof? If he can land on an enemy flying field and be received with open arms? If he can fly over there and give orders, will you believe me? Will that be proof?"

"It sure would be proof," breathed Whitaker. "But that's even more far fetched than the theory of Von Honig being Tommy Horn. How are we going to get such proof?"

"I'll get it," snapped Hasbrouck. "I'll get it. I'll get you more proof. I'll prove to you that no enemy ship will take a chance of shooting down that red nosed white winged Spad that Von Honig flies. I'll prove that right in front of your own eyes. Then, I'll go on over and land on some Jerry tarmac out of this immediate sector. I'll see whether or not they receive me and the little red and white Spad, and I'll come back and tell you all about it. You'll believe me if I land on their side of the lines—and you see me do it, and then come back without a scratch?"

"You're crazy!" said Buzz. "That's out of the question. You'd have your life snuffed out before you got on the ground."

"Yeah?" challenged Hasbrouck. "Well, I don't mean to go waving no flag or anything like that, but listen to this, big boy. Alongside of the thousands of poor goofs that will go blundering into a Jerry trap, and alongside of the importance of this push, my life isn't worth a dime. I'm willing to take a chance. If this drive falls through and the Boche are able to shatter it with a big loss, the war is liable to drag out another year. What's one life to all the lives that will be lost and all the hell the world will see during another year of war like this?

"Furthermore, I don't expect to lose my life. I'm going to give you proof and you're going to admit that I'm right. Is it a bet?"

"Go on," ordered Buzz.

"O.K," continued Bus. "Pretty quick this Von Honig is going to ask you for leave. Maybe just a two day pass. He wants to take a look-see around behind the Front so he can write letters home about it. He'll ask you, mark my words. You give him the leave, understand? Let him get out of the way. Then you and I are going on a little mission together. You're going to stay way behind me. I'm going to hop on the first Jerry I see, with you looking on, and to be sure that you have no idea that I actually shot him down, to prove my point, I'm going to have both my guns loaded with blanks when I go up—get me? No chance for the Jerry I meet to do anything but to pull a dive. If he dives, without being hit, one of my points is proven.

"Then while you hang off, just so you can see me, I'm going down on a Jerry tarmac and I'm going to stay down there for a little while. Then I'm coming back and tell you all about what is doing in Germany. And I'm going down in a Yank ship and in a Yank uniform and I'm coming back the same way. What do you think of that?"

"Plenty, you damned squarehead," grinned Whitaker. "You pull a stunt like that and get away with it and I'll believe Black Jack himself is the Kaiser in disguise."

"I'll pull it," promised Hasbrouck. "I speak German as well as Von Honig, and my eyes are blue and my hair is blond like his. The chance is that some one on the field I land on will know him by sight, but I'm going to try getting away from that by flying way down the line, out of this sector. I'll take that chance. I've got to. Give him the leave so I can get my hands on that little red and white

plaything of his without him knowing it, and I'll do the rest."

"He'll get the leave," promised Whitaker. "He'll get it the moment he asks for it."

In the darkness Bus Hasbrouck smiled a satisfied smile, and patted the 69th's commander on the shoulder.

CHAPTER VI

VON HONIG GOES ON LEAVE

IT WAS exactly two days after Bus Hasbrouck stated that Von Honig would apply for leave, that the German walked into the operations tent and made his request.

"What's on your mind this morning," smiled Buzz Whitaker, as he looked up into the grim face of the spy.

Von Honig smiled and lighted a cigaret.

"I'd like to ask for a two day pass," he told the 69th's commander. "I'm getting a few nerves, too much strain during the last week, I guess, and I think a little walk around would do me a world of good."

Buzz Whitaker looked him over. He looked into the steely eyes. He saw the firm, determined mouth and chin. There was no trace of nervousness there. As he looked, he was thinking of Buz Hasbrouck's certainty that Tommy Horn was a spy. Inwardly, Whitaker felt a little flame of admiration. There was something strange about this fellow. But, there was something strange about every fellow who was flying in a pursuit squadron. They all had little peculiarities. Tommy Horn's seemed to be a cold reticence, a knack of saying nothing and keeping to himself.

"You don't look like a nervous wreck," assured Buzz with a grin. "You look about as healthy as it's possible to be without bursting through your skin. What's the matter, got the creeps?"

Von Honig smiled.

"No, it's not the creeps," he answered. "It's just a little feeling of restlessness that I'd like to work off. You know I've been in France and up here quite a while now, and I've never had the chance of seeing how things were run. I've never seen anything at all outside of the replacement pool and a couple of flying fields. I've actually seen more of the German lines than I have of our own. I'd like to get out and look around and see what makes this war thing go. Imagine a guy going home and telling his grandchildren that he never saw anything of the war excepting the butts of two machine guns and a little cockpit."

Whitaker looked at the orders in front of him.

"Well, it's a tough time to hand out passes," he told Von Honig. "You know we're ordered to hold our full strength every minute and all leaves have been canceled until further orders. However, I know how you feel. I get the heebie jeebies myself every so often. I'll give you a two day pass on the condition that you don't go to Paris, and that you don't get drunk and disorderly. You see, if they catch you like that, they'll know that I'm too easy with the gang here and they'll raise hell with me. I'm giving you the two days right enough but I don't want it talked about—understand?"

Von Honig smiled his thanks.

"I won't even taste the fickle pleasures," he promised. "I'll be a model of deportment. I'll spend the entire time sight seeing and I'll be back here on the dot. Thanks a lot. I appreciate this little leave no end."

For the next minute Buzz Whitaker busied himself writing our the pass for Lieutenant Thomas Horn, 69th Pursuit Squadron, A.E.F. He stamped it with the official rubber stamp of the squadron and handed it to Von Honig.

"Well," he said, "have a good time, and don't get run over by the artillery."

When he was gone, Bus Hasbrouck lounged into the office. A cigaret was dangling out of the side of his mouth. He leaned up against the door of the operations tent for several moments before he entered the office. Inside he snapped the

cigaret out of his mouth with a jerk of his hand. His eyes were blazing with excitement.

"Well," he demanded of Buzz. "Well?"

"He asked for two days," admitted Buzz, "and on your recommendation I gave it to him. Now's the time for you to do your stuff, or forever hold your peace."

"I'm doing it," promised Bus. "What kind of a line did he give you?"

"Said he wanted to do a little sight seeing," informed Whitaker. "Wanted to see what made things go behind the lines."

Bus whistled softly.

"You know," he confided, "I almost like that guy—if for nothing more than his cold guts. Why, man, he was telling you exactly what he wanted that leave for. He wants to see what is going on behind our lines. He has to see what's going on. That's what he's here for. Let's step while the stepping is good."

Half an hour later, Tommy Horn, comfortably seated in a side car, bumped down the road toward Verlains on the first hour of his pass. In the operations office, Bus Hasbrouck paced the floor in a fury of impatience. It was worse now than it had been through the days when Hasbrouck suspected much, but could do nothing. The little doubt arose within him that he was a fool to suspect Tommy Horn. Perhaps he was mistaken in the fellow's resemblance to the Von Honig he had known. He clenched his hands savagely and shook his head. He'd be damned if he's quit at this minute. Give Von Honig a chance to get clear of the field and he was going to jump off in the red and white Spad. When he came down he would know the truth—if he came down.

He knew that if his suspicions were unfounded that he would never get back to the field. He was going out in the red and white Spad to jump the first enemy battle plane he encountered, and he was going out with blank cartridges in his machine guns. If he was right he was safe. If he was wrong— Well, he was just dead.

THEY waited until Von Honig had been gone two hours. Then Whitaker ordered the red and white Spad wheeled out on the line. The ground crew looked at him strangely as he gave the order. They knew that crate to be Tommy Horn's personal ship. They knew that all pilots were touchy. They knew that no one ever flew another man's ship. They stared at Bus Hasbrouck, who sauntered out on to the field in helmet and goggles, ready to take his place in the gaudy ship's cockpit.

They shook heads and predicted catastrophe.

"Remember Ernie Clayton?" asked one. "The bozo who jumped his buddy's ship for a joke. Remember what happened? He just took it clear of the ground when a whole circus of Jerries jumped down on him. Finish for Ernie!"

"That's nothin'!" exclaimed a second. "How about the day when Red Cooley flew Bob Jackson's Nieuport, just to make Bob mad? They ain't found Red yet, have they?"

They would have stared in absolute disbelief had they been able to look at the web belts leading to the twin Vickers in the nose of the Spad. The web belts were loaded with nothing more deadly than dummy cartridges. They were loaded with waxed paper as harmless as blanks.

Hasbrouck nodded to the mechanics. They pulled the prop through on the red and white bird. Down the line they were doing the same thing with Buzz Whitaker's crate. After ten minutes of warming up, Bus climbed into the cockpit, tested controls, revved up the Hisso and waved his hand. The blocks were pulled. Flame spat from the exhaust stacks of the red and white Spad. The tail was blasted off the ground. The slip stream blinded the crouching mechanics. Hasbrouck was off—flying Von Honig's crate.

Down the line another Hisso roared and spat flame. Buzz Whitaker, a blur

in his gray Spad, leaped up into the air on Hasbrouck's tail. The men on the field saw them flying away together, toward the enemy lines. They were climbing high, gaining altitude in great spirals. They passed out of sight of the men on the 69th's field.

After twenty minutes Hasbrouck drew away from the 69th's commander. It was part of their prearranged plan. Hasbrouck was to go ahead with Whitaker hanging as far back as possible. Buzz continued climbing as Hasbrouck headed straight for the Jerry lines.

For fifteen minutes both ships cruised about, Bus far in the lead, Buzz high up where he could look down on everything that occurred. Presently, out of the north sped a dot that grew larger with each second.

In his cockpit, Hasbrouck locked his hand about the stick a trifle more tightly. His jaw set itself into more determined lines. His eyes peered ahead at the approaching spot on the horizon. After another moment he was able to make it out. It was a Fokker and it was flying fast.

He studied his position over the lines carefully. He knew himself to be inside the Jerry lines. How much inside he could not tell, but at least two miles. He glanced back and up. He could not see Buzz Whitaker. The sun was hiding Buzz from all eyes in the north. He smiled grimly and held his nose on the fast flying Jerry.

The Fokker seemed puzzled. It had come up with a rush until it was close enough to make out the red and white Spad clearly. Then the Jerry pilot had pulled down to half throttle and seemed studying the Spad closely. Hasbrouck had the advantage of altitude. He was at least five hundred feet above the cautious Fokker. He decided to force the issue. It seemed to him that the Jerry pilot waved his hand in greeting and then poured the gun to his crate, but Bus could not be sure of the friendly gesture.

He nosed over sharply and made a swift lunge for the Fokker. The quick turning enemy wheeled on its fuselage in a flash and darted back the way it had come. Hasbrouck was hot on his tail. He was diving down under full throttle, his wires screaming and his motor droning in the dive. He was outflying the Fokker three feet to one due to his superior height. When he was about to overtake it, the Fokker turned at bay.

"Now," whispered Hasbrouck to himself, "We'll see what we'll see!"

His thumbs pressed the gun trips. The Vickers in front of him spat much flame and smoke. There was hardly any recoil to the guns—just enough to keep them firing. The Fokker bored in. Hasbrouck deliberately rolled into range of the Jerry's Spandaus. He knew that a pilot intent upon knocking down an enemy ship would take immediate advantage of his error in tactics. The Jerry took advantage. His Spandaus were in action but there was no snapping crackle of death about the ears of Bus Hasbrouck. The bursts from the Spandaus seemed to be hitting nothing but empty air.

Bus forced the Spad over in a sharp loop. This time the Fokker permitted him to take a position directly over its tail. That was the death spot in any air battle. Hasbrouck grinned. Imagine a Fokker standing for a move like that without making desperate attempts to escape! He tripped his harmless guns a second time. He almost wished they were steel laden, for the Fokker was dead in his gun sights. The Jerry pilot looked back. Again it seemed to Bus that he waved his hand, almost in protest. But the Vickers continued to flame and smoke.

IN FRONT of him the Fokker reeled and staggered. It slipped far over on one wing, then its nose went up at a crazy angle as if no restraining hand held the controls. It started down in a slow spin, weaving about in the air like a stricken thing.

In his cockpit Bus Hasbrouck laughed like a crazy man. The enemy lines were

below. He circled over the spot and watched the Fokker almost spin itself in. At the last possible moment, the enemy craft righted itself and escaped a crash landing.

Back in the sun, in the cockpit of a gray Spad, Buzz Whitaker watched the combat. When the Fokker spun down, his eyes became narrow slits and his hands tensed over his stick until there were great white marks over his knuckles. He followed after Bus and the fleet red and White Spad. Bus was penetrating deeper into the east than had any man of the 69th ever before.

Whitaker was still hidden in the sun. He could see Hasbrouck sailing along five thousand feet below him. He knew that Hasbrouck was about to carry out the second part of his plan. He was going to land on an enemy field. He was going to impersonate Karl Von Honig.

When Hasbrouck came to Briey he throttled down. They were a hundred kilometers from the 69th's field. They were over territory strange to them both. For fifteen minutes Bus cruised about inside the enemy lines. He was looking for something. That something was the familiar sight of a flying field.

Suddenly he banked far over and held the red and white Spad in a sharp circle. Buzz Whitaker looked down from his great height. His heart pounded furiously. Bus had found his objective. On the ground, half hidden by a fringe of trees, was a Jerry tarmac. Even as Whitaker glanced over the side of his cockpit, the red and white Spad beneath him nosed down under throttled motor. Whitaker eased back on his own throttle to deaden the beat of his motor. He held his ship in a series of long gentle turns. Hasbrouck was going down in sharp spirals. He saw him hover over the enemy field as if picking his landing place, then he saw him turn into the gentle wind and level off for his landing. The next instant Hasbrouck was rolling the wheels of his ship on the ground.

There was an excited group of gray uniformed figures running forward to greet Hasbrouck. He climbed slowly out of his cockpit. His motor was turning over at idling speed. He stretched his arms and legs luxuriously and lighted a cigaret.

The nearest of the group reached him. He found himself covered with an ugly looking Luger automatic. It was in the hands of a mechanic. A group of officers trotted over the field close on the heels of the excited mechanic.

Hasbrouck surveyed the possessor of the pistol contemptuously. He took a deep breath and forced a snarl into his voice.

"Put that pistol away, swine," he ordered in German. "I'll have you horsewhipped if you point that thing at me. Where is your officer?"

The pistol wavered in the hands of the excited mechanic.

"He is there," he muttered doubtfully. "He comes—hurrying."

Hasbrouck puffed on his cigaret. The gray uniformed officer arrived blowing like a steam engine on an upgrade.

"Tell that dunderhead to put away his pistol," laughed Hasbrouck. "He doesn't know how to use it anyway."

There was a light of perplexity in the officer's eyes. A dozen pilots crowded around the heavily breathing commander.

"A thousand pardons," exclaimed the officer.

He whirled on the unfortunate mechanic and knocked the pistol from his hand.

"Back," he growled. "Use pistols only when I so order."

The mechanic hung his head and marched away from the group.

"You know who I am?" challenged Hasbrouck coldly. "I am Captain Karl Von Honig. You have orders regarding me, yes?"

"Assuredly we have orders, Captain," announced the commander of the *jagdstaffel*. "We have been holding our breaths since we learned that a brother officer was with the enemy. We have been afraid to shoot at a Spad for fear of hitting one of our own men. Then we heard that all Spads were game excepting

one with a red nose and white wings. It is an honor to have you on this field."

Hasbrouck laughed. It was a cold laugh.

"I just 'shot down' a Fokker, back in the direction of Verlains," he informed the group. "Poor fellow, he seemed all perplexed. He didn't want to go down. He could see no reason for it, but I knew that the flight commander of the squadron I am attached to was up there somewhere, and I could take no chances. Look here . . ."

He showed them the inside of the Spad's cockpit. They examined the gun belts filled with dummy cartridges. A roar of laughter went up from the pilots.

"What imbeciles these Yankees must be to permit a condition like this to exist," one said. "Imagine going up with blank cartridges!"

The Jerry commander was choking with laughter. He pounded Hasbrouck on the back in a paroxysm of merriment.

"Come with us," he implored. "Come with us for only five minutes. We have some of that Munich beer. Your throat must be parched for the taste of good beer."

HASBROUCK permitted himself to be led away to the mess hall of the enemy squadron. They trooped about him. They were filled with pride at the exploits of this mysterious officer they all knew by reputation; this officer who dared to impersonate an American aviator and to take his place with an American fighting outfit.

"The whole army is proud of you," informed the German commander. "It talks of you—in whispers. It has said that already you have rendered invaluable services."

The steins were filled with foaming beer of the Fatherland.

"A toast!" shouted the commander. "A toast to the bravest of the brave—to Captain Karl Von Honig!"

They emptied the steins with a "*Hoch!*" Hasbrouck wiped his lips. The beer was good.

"Much as I enjoy this," he told them, "I am pressed for time. I am here on a matter of importance."

"Shall I command that we be left alone?" asked the commander anxiously.

"Not at all necessary," assured Hasbrouck. "This is not a Yankee service—here we are Germans together."

Another roar of laughter greeted the speech.

"I came down here, away from the sector in which I am working to be sure that I escaped observation," Hasbrouck told them. "Now I must be serious. You will send word back to the high command that I expect news of great importance having to do with the coming Yankee push. I should have the news within the next two days. It will be grave news and must be acted upon on the instant. Already they have made preparations for a great offensive against our lines. I will be able to give maps and other information that will make it possible for our armies to meet and defeat this move. It should be a great victory."

They were staring at him as if he were a man from another world.

"One thing," he admonished them sternly. "It will be necessary to take immediate action when my messages are dropped. They were slow in picking them up the last time. I am risking my life each time I communicate with our lines, and I must be protected. Not that my own life counts for anything, but for the good of the cause. Then, these pilots I meet are not good actors. They don't know how to fly a ship as if it were mortally hit. I must have better acting along these lines or I will be suspected. Remember, the Yankee attack is on us. Remember to get my message to the high command. That is all, comrades. Now I must go back to the Yankee pigs—away from your good fellowship and your good Munich beer. Until the day!"

They lifted a last stein high into the air.

"Until the day!" they answered in unison.

They were quiet as he walked across the field to where the red and white Spad was standing with motor turning over at idling speed. One or two smiled at the thought of the guns with dummy cartridges. They patted him on the back as he crawled into the cockpit.

"Safe return, Captain," called the German commander. "We await your orders."

Hasbrouck nodded cheerfully and smiled at them. He blasted the Hisso with expert hand. The tail cleared the ground. The wheels rolled forward, gathered speed, leaped off the field, and the red and white Spad was gone—off the Jerry field, with never a shot fired, with never a scratch, and with the pilot happy in the possession of three steins of good Munich beer.

Flying along, low over the ground, Bus Hasbrouck's eyes were filled with triumph. He was right. He had guessed right. He had trapped a spy! A spy who would have betrayed the entire Army into Jerry hands had it not been for him. It was a just feeling of triumph. It was a just exultation. He pointed the red nose of the Spad toward the southwest and skimmed homeward.

From his vantage post in the heavens, Buzz Whitaker watched him go. He too pointed the nose of his Spad toward the home field and followed after the speeding Hasbrouck. There was no longer any doubt in his mind as to the correctness of Hasbrouck's theory. He was filled with rage. He was thinking of poor Tommy Horn, burned to death in the cockpit of a Fokker, and of Karl Von Honig, alive and smiling.

CHAPTER VII

BUS TRAPS THE SPY

THAT night in the operations tent, Bus and Buzz Whitaker conferred in whispers.

"Are you satisfied now?" questioned Bus. "Or do you still think I'm crazy?"

"I'm satisfied," growled Whitaker. "We'll get this guy and get him good. It'll do me a lot of good to see him bucking a firing squad."

"Not a chance of that," warned Bus with a shake of his head. "Not right away, at any rate. It just can't be done that way, or all our work is for nothing. We need him in our business to make sure that he keeps on sending our plans to his side. If he gets wise that something is up and gets away, knowing that there is to be a change in our plans, we'll lose the chance for the biggest victory since the beginning of the war. Let him think that he's getting away with murder. Let him fly his little red and white plane some more. It'll do him a lot of harm and us a lot of good."

"Well," snapped Whitaker. "What can I do with that guy around here? I'm not a good actor. I'll make a break and sure as hell that will spill the beans."

"You go back and fix things at G.H.Q. like I told you," urged Hasbrouck. "I'll take care of things here while you're away. All I want to know is that the infantry is on to a new objective and that they've abandoned the first plans of attack. See? Here's the dope. They'll see it as soon as you spring it. Tell them to order a strong artillery concentration along the line first picked for the offensive.

"That'll make the Jerries think that everything is O.K. and that the attack is coming through the place Von Honig has told them to expect it. See? Then, at night, have them make a troop concentration somewhere else, without the accompanying artillery fire. Get the idea? The Jerries will be massed where the noise is the loudest, expecting the attack at that point. Instead of that, our doughboys will go forward without any fireworks, and before the Jerries are wise to the change in plans why the infantry will be half way to Berlin. It's simple. The big noises down at G.H.Q. will see it in a minute."

"I'll go," promised Whitaker, "but I feel like a damn' fool."

"Oh, well, that's natural," grinned Bus.

That night, for the first time since the

squadron was organized, the commander of the 69th was absent. He was seated in a brightly lighted room miles to the south, in the presence of more generals and marshals than he knew to exist, undergoing a grilling that would have shaken the nerve of a hardened criminal. He conducted himself well. When the grilling was finished, a gray mustached officer looked around the gold braided circle with a smile.

"Gentlemen," he told them, "I think the Lord has placed in our hands an instrument stronger than any we possessed. This officer has been the agent of the Almighty. His reasoning is shrewd. His conduct has been marvelous. We are on the threshold of a great victory.

All that night columns of infantry moved up to the Front under the screen of darkness. With the coming of day, they lay face down in the fields and woods, chafing at the queer procedure, and going forward again only with the coming of the next night.

Artillery moved boldly, concentrating upon a certain part of the line. Battery after battery moved up. It was a concentration such as had not been seen on the part of the Allies since the first battle of the Marne. Big guns, howitzers, field pieces, railroad guns, of all calibers, moving up to hurl death upon a narrow strip of ground occupied by enemy troops.

And along the Front, passed an officer in the uniform of an American flyer. He smoked innumerable cigarets. His keen eye counted the guns and batteries as they lumbered by, and filed the information in his brain. The flying officer was quite at ease. In his pocket was an official pass made out in the name of Lieutenant Thomas Horn, 69th Pursuit Squadron, A.E.F, and signed by the squadron commander of that unit.

He saw the guns going forward. He noted the position in the lines. But he did not see the troops stealing up to new positions on the Front with the cover of night. It would have given him food for much thought had he been able to solve the mystery of artillery going in one direction and infantry in another.

ON THE field of the 69th, Bus Hasbrouck awaited the return of Von Honig. He knew that the spy would report back to the field well within the time limit of his pass. He could see everything he desired to see within the twenty-four hours at his disposal. Hasbrouck was puzzling his brain for a plan to render the Boche harmless. He must be kept in the dark, and he must not be permitted to fly. He must not know that he was uncovered. No man in the 69th, with the exception of Bus Hasbrouck and the squadron commander, knew that Tommy Horn was Karl Von Honig. To spread such information through the squadron would have been fatal to Hasbrouck's plans.

Von Honig strutted into the operations tent six hours before his pass was up. His face was freshly shaven. His eyes were glowing.

"Just reporting back," he informed Bus. "Where's Lieutenant Whitaker?"

"I'm boss for the present," grinned Bus. "Whitaker was called back to G.H.Q. Something about the plans for the coming rumpus."

Von Honig glanced at Hasbrouck keenly. He could read nothing in Bus's untroubled eyes.

"It promises to be pretty hot, pretty quick," ventured Von Honig. "At the rate they seem to be moving artillery to the front, there isn't a spare gun this side of Italy. I think every battery in the Army is under marching orders, and all headed for this sector."

"Oh, we're going to be the center of attraction," smiled Hasbrouck. "Leave it to the big guys to see that we get all the action in sight. I expect we'll all be ducking shells for the next six months."

"The enemy won't have a chance," predicted Von Honig.

"Don't make a common mistake," parried Bus, matching guile with guile. "A Jerry is always dangerous until he stops wiggling. I know."

"Well, check me in," laughed Von Honig. "I want a lot of credit for coming back six hours ahead of schedule."

"You deserve a tin halo," agreed Bus.

"Wanted to write some letters home," confided Von Honig. "Haven't written the folks in a coon's age."

He walked out of the door of the operations tent and to his own quarters. There was a light glowing in his tent for two hours after he had turned in. Bus watched that light with anxious eyes. He knew the home to which Von Honig was writing letters.

He paced up and down in the shadow of the tent hangars for hours. He continued to pace after the light in Von Honig's tent had gone for an hour. He was expecting Von Honig to make an effort to conceal his report somewhere about the red and white Spad. He denied himself the companionship of a cigaret, afraid that the glow might warn the spy that he was observed. He was about to turn in, when he heard a soft footfall on the sod. He threw himself face down alongside of the brown tent and peered through the blackness of the night.

He could not see Von Honig. He could sense his presence, however. He heard a hand slide along the fabric of the red and white Spad's fuselage. He heard the same hand feel its way over the wood in back of the pilot's seat.

"The dispatch compartment," thought Hasbrouck to himself. "He's putting his report in the dispatch compartment tonight, so he won't have to take the chance of carrying it out with him in the morning."

He heard the slight click of the hook fitting into the eye which secured the door of the compartment. The cautious footsteps passed out of his hearing. He snaked along the ground, following Von Honig until he saw him enter his quarters.

Then he sought his own tent. He knew that Von Honig would not hurry in his plans. He knew that sometime on the morrow, Von Honig would become separated from the squadron and would find a way to drop the report he had prepared. Bus smiled sleepily to himself. He was going to give Von Honig the chance he wanted. He was going to send him on a solo dawn patrol. Von Honig would have a free hand in getting rid of his report. That night Bus Hasbrouck slept the sleep of a weary man who finds it possible to rest for the first time in many days.

WITH the first streaks of dawn he was awake. He sent an orderly to summon Von Honig for the dawn patrol. The German came into the operations tent rubbing his eyes and appearing half asleep.

"Send for me?" he asked with a yawn.

"Yeah, my mistake. I forgot to tell you last night that you were on the slate for a solo dawn patrol this morning. You're the freshest man in the outfit today. Knew you wouldn't mind the assignment while the rest of the birds get some rest. Fly along the lines between here and Clinchy and come in in about two hours and a half. Nothing much doing."

"O.K." agreed Von Honig. "I'll grab a shot of coffee and be on my way."

In spite of the sleepiness in the German's eyes, Bus Hasbrouck had not missed the gleam of triumph that had flashed for the tiniest part of a second. He knew that Von Honig was exulting over his luck. Bus smiled his grim little smile. It was giving Von Honig a chance to go and never return. But Bus knew that he would return. The game was too exciting. He would come back.

Ten minutes later there was the roar of a Hisso from the half gloom of the field, and Hasbrouck got to the door of the operations tent just in time to see the red and white Spad take off.

An hour later, Buzz Whitaker returned from G.H.Q. His eyes were haggard and his face white. He had all the marks of two sleepless nights.

"Where's the boy friend?" he demanded of Bus.

"Just sent him on an errand," grinned Hasbrouck.

"You what?" exploded Whitaker.

"I sent him on a solo dawn patrol," affirmed Hasbrouck. "He came back last night, six hours ahead of his time, and busied himself for two hours 'writing letters home'. Then he sneaked out on the field and put his letters in the dispatch compartment in his crate. I saw him; I was trailing him. I thought I'd give him a good chance to deliver his reports, so I sent him off alone."

"My God," groaned Buzz. "You shouldn't have done that. We'll lose him sure. Right now he's sitting pretty on some Jerry field telling the boys how he took us in."

Hasbrouck shook his head.

"Don't forget I'm a squarehead myself," disagreed Hasbrouck. "He'll come back. He thinks that everything is jake with him. He'd be a fool to give up at this stage of the game. Even if he did he has delivered the wrong plans to his friends. They'll just about stand him up against a wall and shoot him when they find out that his report is all wrong. What's the news from down below?"

"Oh, the staff fell for your plan like a load of bricks," said the weary commander of the 69th. "They seem to think that the war is as good as won. They're moving all the artillery up to Clichy, but the infantry is coming up here. They're going to bust through here on a wild tear. The push is due tomorrow at dawn. Hell is sure going to pop in this neck of the woods."

"Well, let it pop," grinned Bus. "We've got our bird—and he's done all the dirty work."

"We'll have him if he returns," grunted Whitaker. "He isn't back yet."

"Bet you next month's pay he comes back here within two hours," offered Bus.

In spite of his weariness, Whitaker smiled.

"No go, squarehead," he told Bus. "You've got a nasty habit of always being right."

It was exactly forty-five minutes later when Von Honig touched the wheels of the red and white Spad to the tarmac of the 69th squadron, and made his report.

"Quiet," he told them, looking from Buzz to Bus. "Not a peep out of anything anywhere. Like a graveyard. Flew twice between here and Clichy but didn't get a rise out of a single Jerry. Looks as if they're all asleep. Even flew back into their lines for five miles, but they didn't want to play."

"Thanks," nodded Bus. "I'm now stepping down from the high command of this high flying outfit. The boss is back."

Whitaker did not grin. Von Honig thought it was because he was so fatigued.

One thing Bus Hasbrouck did not know. That was that on his way back, Von Honig had hung over the lines between Clichy and Verlains. He saw the batteries going up to Clichy, and there was no supporting infantry clogging the roads. Then over Verlains, he saw a division passing into the woods before the place and disappear. He studied the ground carefully. He came to the conclusion that there were more divisions on the ground, in the shelter of the woods. He came down close. He saw rows and rows of khaki lying face down in the fields. They were as quiet as dead men, but Von Honig knew they were not dead.

A CHANGE in plans. A change, right after he had dropped the full report on the Allied preparations for the push! A panic seized him. It would be necessary to drop a new message having to do with this mysterious movement of troops before the Verlains Front. It would not do to write the message in his own tent. There was always a chance that some one would enter and discover him in the act. He decided to write the report—a brief one—in the spare parts tent. Later in the day he would have a chance to drop the message.

He secured several sheets of paper and his fountain pen.

There were two mechanics working in the spare parts tent. They were soldering damaged radiators with a blow torch. Von Honig entered the tent.

"Out on the line," he ordered, "and help with those ships."

The two mechanics looked up in surprise, but offered no protest. They trotted out, leaving the blow torch on the ground, still burning.

Von Honig rested his paper upon the work bench and wrote rapidly in German for several minutes. He was going over the position of the concealed infantry as he had seen it from the air, drawing a perfect word map of the location.

Hasbrouck passed within the open flap of the tent. His step was noiseless. He had not taken his eyes off Von Honig for a single instant. He watched him enter his tent for paper and his fountain pen. Then he had seen him enter the spare parts tent.

The 69th was about to take the air for the morning patrol. The motor in Bus Hasbrouck's ship was already turning over. Behind it, the red and white Spad was standing on the line, its motor turning at idling speed, cooling before it was shut off altogether.

As he stepped into the tent, gliding close to the canvas wall so as to make no shadow, a sudden alarm swept over Hasbrouck. He knew that the time had come to capture Von Honig and render him harmless. His lips were curled back over his teeth. He was almost wishing that Buzz Whitaker was close at his heels. It would be a nasty fight, if it came to that. Von Honig would not be easy to handle.

He saw the spy nod his head several times as if satisfied with what he had written. He saw him fold the papers. He was about to put them into his tunic pocket. The flap was unbuttoned, ready to receive them. Hasbrouck stepped forward.

"I'll take those papers, Von Honig!" he said coldly, in precise German.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAP RECOILS

VON HONIG'S face was drained of color. He stared at the stern Hasbrouck like some wild thing in a trap. Unconsciously, the hands holding the papers went behind his back. He took a backward step until he was wedged against the workbench behind him. His eyes were wide open and staring at the bleak faced Hasbrouck.

"I said I'd take them," repeated Bus in German, walking forward. "Your little game is done. You're the pitcher that went to the well once too often. Any one but a German would have gone this morning and never returned. I was betting that you'd come back. That's why I gave you leave to go—you damned spy."

Von Honig was breathing again. He was even smiling.

"You speak wonderful German for a Yankee," he complimented Hasbrouck.

"I'm German myself," said Bus. "That is, I was German. I'm an American now."

"Bah!" sneered Von Honig. "German once, German always."

"That's what you think," spat Hasbrouck. "You lived in America almost as long as I did. You went to school there. You played with those boys and they accepted you as a friend. Then you run back here when there is a war, murder an American boy and burn him to death in a Jerry ship so you can take his place on the strength of the education you gained in America. You were ready to betray thousands of American boys and send them to death. Why?"

"I am a soldier," said Von Honig with a toss of his blond head. "I am not a traitor to my country like you are." The report he had written was still clutched in his hands behind his back.

"You may call it traitor," snarled Hasbrouck. "Your kind would, but I'm satisfied."

"Listen," said Von Honig in a low tone. "You forget this and give me the

chance to get away, and I'll forget your actions here. I'll forget to report that I saw a German serving with a country that is attacking the Fatherland."

"You'll what?" asked Hasbrouck, dumb with amazement. "You've got one hell of a crust. You'll never have a chance to report anything after today."

"Oh, yes, I will," promised Von Honig coldly. "You're mistaken. Already I have given the information that I came to secure. When your big push, as you call it, hurls itself against the soldiers of the Fatherland, it will find itself repulsed and shattered. Germany will win the war. It is written in the stars."

Hasbrouck smiled grimly.

"Listen, Jerry," he said. "I knew you from the first. I played football against you, Michigan against Penn, remember? I was sure you were Von Honig and not Tommy Horn. I watched you like a cat watches a mouse. You haven't been out from under my eyes for a minute. I even told Buzz Whitaker to let you go on leave so that it would be easier for you to get the information you wanted. Then we fixed it to have the plans changed. Your friends are running around preparing for an attack against Clichy. Well, they are going to a lot of trouble for nothing. The real attack is going over in front of here—at Verlains—and it is going to tear hell out of you. You see, you've helped us after all."

The smile was still on Von Honig's face.

"Oh, I see. That accounts for the troop concentrations I observed on my way back this morning?"

"Right," smiled Hasbrouck. "They go over at dawn."

"Thanks for the information," said Von Honig. "I'll make the necessary changes in my report, as you call it."

"You've got a lot of guts, I'll admit," laughed Hasbrouck. "However, as I said before this friendly little party started, I'll take those papers you have behind your back."

Von Honig took a step forward. He held the papers out at arm's length.

"Oh, if you insist, you may have them without a struggle," he told Hasbrouck. "They'll never do you any good, however."

"I'm the best judge of that," answered Bus. "I'll take them."

HE EXTENDED his arm. As the papers left Von Honig's hand, the smile on his face broadened into a grin. He was holding a .25 caliber automatic pistol. The pistol was pointed exactly at Hasbrouck's heart.

Bus glanced up to meet the mocking light in the spy's eyes.

"You see?" grinned Von Honig. "You can't outthink a Prussian. While you were talking I was able to slip this little toy out of my hip pocket and conceal it under the papers. Now I regret to tell you that if you move, or attempt the slightest sound, I'll shoot the heart out of you. You know I mean it. I may be captured, but you will not see the capture. First, I'll take back the papers. I know you have no gun concealed under them."

He secured the papers from Hasbrouck and stowed them in his tunic pocket. He motioned Bus toward the workbench.

"Back close to the bench, please. Don't make a single move I may misinterpret. I'm a little nervous after your dramatic entry. I may do something you'll be sorry for."

He secured several strands of ordinary wire off the floor and bound Hasbrouck's hands behind him. The thin wire cut through the flesh cruelly. Hasbrouck gritted his teeth to keep back a groan of anguish. Then Von Honig lashed Bus's elbows together as tightly as possible. He was working swiftly, expertly. He completed his job by winding the wire around and around Bus's legs in tight loops, and making the whole binding fast with several twists. He then stuffed his handkerchief into Hasbrouck's mouth and wired it in place. When he had finished, Hasbrouck was as helpless as a mummy in a case. His arms were bound rigidly behind him. His knees were bound tightly

together. He could move his fingers and toes and head—nothing else.

Von Honig permitted himself a final gesture of triumph. He placed his foot behind Hasbrouck and gave him a shove. Bus fell heavily to the floor. His head struck with a dull thud.

Von Honig grinned down at him.

"You wonder how I am going to get away, eh? Well, it is simple. I am going out, climb in my machine and fly away, and there isn't a man on your field with enough brains to stop me. Goodby, swine, until I catch you in the air."

With a shrug of his shoulders he sauntered out through the door of the parts tent. Outside he extracted a cigaret from his silver case, touched a match to it, and with a leisurely eye, surveyed the activity of the field. A look of dismay crossed his face as he glanced toward his red and white Spad. It was standing on the line, but the prop was dead stick. The motor had cooled and a mechanic had cut the switch.

Von Honig cursed feelingly under his breath. He walked over to the group working about Hasbrouck's ship, the motor of which was idling.

"Who cut the switch in my ship?" he demanded.

"I did, sir," answered one of the mechanics in surprise. "It was cool, so I thought you wanted it cut."

"Mind your own damn' business the next time," snarled Von Honig. "When I want advice on how to take care of a motor, I'll get it from some one who knows something about it. Get to hell out of here. Where is Lieutenant Hasbrouck?" he demanded of Bus's mechanic.

"Don't know, sir," answered the mechanic. "He's due now, ready for patrol."

"Well, I'm flying his crate today," announced Von Honig. "How's the gas?"

"Full up, sir," replied the mechanic. "You're getting even with him, eh?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Von Honig. "Even for what?"

"Turn about," grinned the mechanic. "He flew your crate once, now you fly his and it's all even."

"He flew mine?" questioned Von Honig in a strange voice. "When?"

"One of the days you were away," answered the mechanic. "The first day, I think it was. He got a Jerry with it, too. Shot him down out of control inside their own lines."

There was a light of hell in Von Honig's eyes.

"So he flew my ship, did he?" grated the spy. "I hope he rots in hell!"

"I thought you knew all about it," mumbled the mechanic. "The squadron commander and he flew together."

"Well, I'll fly this one today just to get even," grinned Von Honig coldly. He was fighting to subdue a sudden panic in his heart.

He glanced about quickly. Whitaker was still in the operations tent. The other pilots due for the mission were not as yet on the field. He crawled into the cockpit of Hasbrouck's crate.

MEANWHILE, inside the spare parts tent, a wildly struggling Bus Hasbrouck was fighting to break the torturing pressure of his bonds. The wire was cutting into his hands and legs. After five minutes of silent struggling he knew that it was hopeless. He knew that some one must discover him before he could be free. That would be too late. Von Honig would be gone and the secret of the false attack with him.

He stared about, his eyes searching for anything that promised to assist him. He knew that it might be an hour before any one entered the tent. In the bustle of getting off the daily patrol, all of the ground men and mechanics would be busily engaged. His eyes lighted upon the still burning blow torch. It seemed the only thing inside the tent possessed of life or motion. He studied it for a long minute, trying to fit it in with a plan of escape. A light of hope crept into his eyes. He rolled his body over and over until his feet were touching the torch.

Then, slowly, inches at a time, he pushed the flaming torch across the floor. He lifted himself by the muscles of his neck. It was a terrible strain with the cruel wires cutting him. Slowly but surely he moved the torch toward the nearest wall of the tent.

Twice during the slow march the flame curled around his feet and ankles. He could smell burning leather. He knew his feet had been burned, but still he went forward. His hands and arms were running blood. There was a cold perspiration on his forehead. With a convulsive kick he toppled the torch over against the oil soaked tent wall, and then rolled his body in the direction of the door. He knew it would be a race with death. He knew that the canvas would burn with the fury of an oil well. But he also knew that the fire would attract attention and bring men running in the direction of the danger. He hoped that he could roll his body through the tent mouth before the flame leaped up around him—before he was burned alive—but he had to take the chance. He had been too sure in handling Von Honig. He had given him his opportunity for escape.

He heard a cry of alarm from the field just as he rolled through the tent flaps. The fire was already hot upon his face. He tried to move his bleeding body farther out of the pathway of the flame. He heard nail studded shoes pounding toward him over the sod. Some one reached down and picked him up. The gag was snatched from his mouth. But before all that, he had heard the roar of a Hisso motor and saw his own ship racing down the field to a takeoff.

"Cut the wires, quick!" gasped Hasbrouck. "Pliers. Cut 'em. For God's sake, hurry!"

A mechanic yanked a pair of pliers from his overalls and severed the confining wires in a series of rapid snips. When his bonds fell to the ground, Hasbrouck came within an inch of plunging on his face. He tottered forward, toward the nearest ship on the line with its motor turning over.

The parts tent was an inferno behind him. He could hear Buzz Whitaker shouting orders. But he had no ears nor eyes for anything save the first Spad on the line.

It seemed that he took years in traversing the hundred yards between the flaming tent and the ship. He threw himself into the cockpit.

"Pull those blocks," he ordered.

A staring mechanic obeyed. Hasbrouck threw the gun forward with a sweep of his hand. The Spad gathered speed and tore down the field. In the distance, flying low and fast, he made out the gray shape of the fugitive, Von Honig.

CHAPTER IX

STEEL FOR STEEL

HASBROUCK made no attempt to gain altitude. He sent his Spad rocketing over the tree tops. His eyes were fixed on the ship before him. He made no note of his position. It made no difference to him if he were over territory held by friend or foe. His brain was a rioting tumult of anger. Blood streamed down over his arms and wrists where the wire had cut into his flesh. His legs and arms burned with glowing fire. His chest seemed oppressed with a heavy weight. A wolflike grin spread over his face—a mechanical, terrible grin of triumph. He was gaining.

Von Honig was losing speed in an attempt to gain altitude. As yet he had not observed the Spad beneath. Hasbrouck knew that he was less than a mile behind the fleeing spy. His heart was keeping pace with the straining motor. He shook the web belts leading to the guns with a careful hand. This time there would be no dummy cartridges in the ribbons.

This time steel would challenge steel. Spad against Spad, and Hasbrouck knew that his mastery of a Spad was complete. He knew that with an even break, Von Honig would never land upon a German

field with the corrections in the American battle plans.

He was crawling up slowly. He eased the nose of the Spad up just a trifle and gained two hundred feet in altitude without loosing speed. The front lines were a blur beneath him. He knew the men down there were awaiting the word that would send them over to glorious victory or terrible defeat. He knew it all depended upon his overtaking and destroying Von Honig.

Straight as an arrow the spy was making for his own lines and the safety of a Jerry field. Hasbrouck was close now. His eyes were mere points. He could make out the head of Von Honig as it showed over the curve of the cockpit. He grinned the terrible wolf grin and touched the trips of his Vickers with a caressing hand. The Hisso roared in front of him. The exhaust smoke blown back into his face by the slip stream was incense. The hot oil splashes were a joy to his cheeks. His hair blew back in the wind. His eyes needed no goggles.

They were over the Boche lines. Trim and well kept trenches of concrete showed in straight, well ordered lines. Von Honig was hunting for a field. He was hunting for his own field. An open space loomed up before him. Suddenly he banked over on one wing as if to make a complete circle of the field before dropping down, and he came almost face to face with the pursuing Spad. He zoomed wildly. Hasbrouck glanced up at him for an instant, then he pushed the nose of his Spad down, and diving upon the enemy field under full throttle, cut in his guns and raked it from end to end with burst after burst of singing steel. Hangars, ships on the line, laboring mechanics, everything that came within range was blasted by the fury of his guns. He still wore the mirthless grin.

"Let's see you go down there now," he muttered to himself. "Let's see you play tag with the boys on the ground after that shellacking. Go on down."

As if in answer to his dare, Von Honig made a wild swoop for a landing on the Boche field. But this time the ground crew was ready for a visit from a Spad. Spandaus, mounted on revolving bases, pointed blunt noses toward the sky. The Spad under Von Honig's hand slipped for the earth, and as it slipped, the ground machine guns picked it up in eager sights and the gunners shouted in glee as splinters flew from the wings and fuselage of the ship.

Hasbrouck's grin was wider.

"You're not flying a red nosed Spad with white wings now," he growled between set teeth. "You'll take your medicine and like it, and your friends are handing it out. Come up and fight."

Wild with rage, Von Honig was shaking his fist over the side of his cockpit at the stupid gunners who would not let him land on his own field. He made a second attempt and again the machine guns on the ground drove him back. He nosed up in a wild zoom to find that Hasbrouck was waiting for him; that death threatened from above as well as from below.

Hasbrouck's Spad was between Von Honig and Boche territory. Relentlessly, Hasbrouck forced the spy to fight or to give ground. Von Honig was reluctant to give battle. He knew that the plans he carried were far more important than a victory over a single ship. He knew that unless he could land and deliver his report it would be too late—the American surprise attack would be launched before the German front lines were ready to receive it.

He was white with anger. His cruel mouth was set in a straight line. He felt himself being played with, pushed back, little by little, by the shrewd flying Hasbrouck. He did not know that it was Hasbrouck's intention to anger him. He merely knew that a Spad was keeping him from attaining his objective.

He saw the German front lines slipping away from him. His dodging and twisting tactics had lost him precious territory. Raging, he turned to face the gray, wolf-like thing that hung to him so relentlessly, blocking his every move.

HE PULLED his ship over into a tight loop. In his cockpit, Bus Hasbrouck smiled the mirthless grin and reached for his gun trips. He held the Spad straight for an instant, until Von Honig was on his back in the loop, then he zoomed up sharply, caught the Boche in his gun sights as he came screaming down out of the whirl. Hasbrouck was hanging on his prop. His crate was almost at a dead stall. Von Honig was squarely in his sights, and he permitted the Spad to fall forward out of the stall. As its nose followed the end of Von Honig's loop, Hasbrouck cut in his guns, and his mouth curled with triumph at their grim chatter.

He was too close to miss. The burst smashed into the after fuselage of the spy's ship. Splinters flew in a shower. Tattered linen streaked out in the air. Von Honig pushed his nose down and plunged wildly, twisting from side to side to destroy the aim of those deadly Vickers in front of Hasbrouck.

He was farther and farther away from his own territory. He was drifting back inside the Allied lines. Desperately he turned and attempted to out speed Hasbrouck. But the darting Spad on his tail headed him off, and once more the snap of death, flung by a hot Vickers, crackled about his ears.

There was a certain finality in the tone of that crackling. Von Honig recognized that finality. His eyes studied the ground, figuring his chances for a crash landing and escape. His lips curved in a cold smile. He whirled his stolen ship about. His eyes were glinting with hate. His head was close over his gun sights. He charged down upon Hasbrouck like a wild animal at bay.

Again Hasbrouck smiled and nodded his head. He expected a fight sooner or later. Over his shoulder he had noted the appearance of a Spad unit. They were coming from the direction of the 69th's field. Bus knew that Buzz Whitaker was flying at their head, and that they were looking for him and Von Honig. He knew that Buzz must be crazy with the fear that Von Honig had escaped and that all was lost.

Well, he would show them the end of Von Honig. He sideslipped gracefully and evaded the mad plunge of the spy. As he slipped, he eased up on his throttle, nosed down, kicked right rudder, threw the gun to the ship again, pulled back on the stick and zoomed up until his nose was close under Von Honig's belly. Again the Vickers spat in deadly fury. He saw the stolen Spad shudder and tremble from the effects of that burst.

He jumped in, trying to get as close as possible—trying for a single final burst. Below him was friendly territory. He knew that when he went down, Von Honig would have no chance to carry the message he wished to deliver. Dead or alive now, he could not hurt the cause for which Bus Hasbrouck was fighting.

The stolen Spad rolled sharply and for an instant its nose was full on Hasbrouck's ship. A wave of steel swept through the fuselage of the pursuing ship. Longerons splintered and cross members were hit through and through. Like a live thing stung by a wasp, the Spad rolled out of the way of the burst. It seemed to gather speed as it rolled. It was headed for the Allied lines. Von Honig's nose was pointed north.

For an instant the spy saw a chance for escape. He put the nose of his ship down to gain the last atom of speed and headed for his own lines. It was a last desperate attempt. Behind him, Hasbrouck half rolled out of a power loop and dived on the same angle. Von Honig looked back from his seat. He could make out the white circle of Hasbrouck's face and the wind swept mop of blond hair. He turned his head. There was nothing else to do. Foot by foot the ship behind him gained. He could hear the roar of Hasbrouck's motor over the roar of his own. He knew that death was about to touch him on the shoulder.

White faced, Bus Hasbrouck leaned over his gun sights. Little by little his nose drew up on the tail of the fleeting ship. He was not more than fifty feet

distant. His right thumb squeezed hard on the gun trips. A wave of white and orange and green from around the muzzles of his guns hid Von Honig from his sight for a moment. When the slip stream carried away the fog before his eyes, he saw the spy slumped in his seat. He zoomed wildly to escape crashing into the faltering ship in front of him. The ailerons on the stolen ship were banging up and down. The prop was shattered. The Hisso in Von Honig's ship had raced for a single instant, then it had thrown the con rods through the crank case, and an angry red tongue of flame was licking up from around the motor base.

IT NOSED over. The flame crackled and roared. The red tongue ran a shrewd tip around the right wing. It disappeared for a moment, then broke out in a new fury. Little by little it ate its way back to the pilot's cockpit. There was the sight of a blackened leather helmet, and then the mass of flame hid the cockpit from view.

The Spad plunged down like a flaming meteor. It was but a short distance to the ground. It hit with a terrific shock and rebounded, to shatter itself into bits of flaming wreckage.

Hasbrouck turned his Spad on its axis and flew back to his own field. He was weak and nauseated. He knew that the entire squadron had seen the finish of that fight. He knew that they had been within range of the stolen Spad when he had smashed home the final burst. He knew that they would follow him in.

He was on the field, sitting in his cockpit, when they taxied up to the line. It seemed that he did not have strength enough to lift himself over the side of the ship. Buzz Whitaker galloped up to the side of Hasbrouck's crate.

"What in hell—" he sputtered.

"Too much rope," grinned Hasbrouck. "We gave him too much rope. I went in the spare parts tent to tell him the jig was up, and I caught him writing a report on the new positions of our troops. He spotted them as he flew back this morning. Clever guy, that."

"But the fire," said Whitaker. "How in hell did the fire start?"

"Well, you see he tied me up with baling wire so that I couldn't move and he gagged me so that I couldn't yell. A couple of grease balls left a blow torch burning on the floor of the tent. I kicked it over to the side wall and burned the place down to attract attention."

"And took a chance of burning yourself to death!" snapped Whitaker.

"Oh, I kind of figured that one of you guys would come running in time to pull me out—or at least to put me out," grinned Bus. "Anyway, I rolled almost all the way out of the tent. I didn't get burned at all, but those wires hurt like hell."

"Well, one thing you can bet on—those reports of Von Honig's are a total loss. We flew over the wreck on the way back and there isn't enough left of the whole works to write a report on."

Hasbrouck smiled happily. He was about to speak, but his face contorted with pain. He slumped down in his seat—out. Whitaker pulled him out of the crate, and carried him to his cot. The pain had been too great.

CHAPTER X

VICTORY

AT DAWN of the next morning, guns thundered along the Front. Near Clichy, the greatest artillery concentration the world had ever seen hurled shrapnel, high explosives and gas at the German lines. Huddled in concrete trenches rocked by the terrific blasts of the artillery preparation, thirty German divisions waited to repel the expected attack of the Americans. The officers smiled to themselves. There was nothing new in a terrific artillery preparation before an attack. They knew they were safe. They knew the Yankees would hurl themselves upon a withering hail of

death the moment the khaki clad lines began to advance.

Before Verlains, ten American divisions awaited the word to advance. Here they had no artillery preparation. The Front was still with the stillness of death. Before them, on the enemy side of the lines, every available regiment had been moved to Clichy to resist the shock of the American attack. The doughboys lay in the woods or remained standing within the dark depths of the forest. The sun peeped over the eastern horizon. A general officer blew a shrill blast upon a whistle. The blast was repeated up and down the line. The khaki wave swept from concealment. They went forward at a dog trot. Ahead of them, a wire wrecking crew cut a path.

There was a startled pounding of machine guns in front of them. They swept on through the wire, into the front line trenches which had once been considered impregnable, mopped them up, and went on, deeper and deeper into enemy territory. All the while, the fireworks at Clichy banged away steadily.

A sudden panic ran through the thirty divisions before Clichy. News was seeping in that the Americans had penetrated the lines in force; that miles of ground had been lost and a deep salient driven before Verlains. The artillery concentration took heavy toll as the German divisions were ordered out of the snug shelter of the concrete trenches to oppose the American advance at Verlains.

The thrust forward was checked finally. It was checked more because the victorious Americans desired to consolidate the ground they had won rather than because of enemy opposition. At the close of the day, complete victory was in the hands of the American troops.

On a cot, tossing with the fever and pain of lacerated arms and legs, was Bus Hasbrouck, squarehead, who had gained the victory.

Behind a massive desk in the reception room of a great old château, a gray man stared out through the open windows into the beautiful garden in which the house was set. There were a number of telegrams held loosely in his left hand. It seemed that he was drinking in the beauty of the scene before his eyes. In fact, he was being acquainted with the greatest disaster the German armies had suffered since the beginning of the war. The telegrams told him of priceless positions taken in a single wild thrust forward on the part of the American troops. His face was lined with care. He knew that back home, in the Fatherland, a disillusioned people were crying to him to lead them out of the depths of militarism, into the light of freedom from tyranny. Yet, he was a soldier.

"The losses are terrific," he told his aide in a quiet voice. "The plan of defense miscarried."

"Yes, Excellency," answered the grave looking aide. "Captain Von Honig, the man who gave us the information, was mistaken in his placing of the attack."

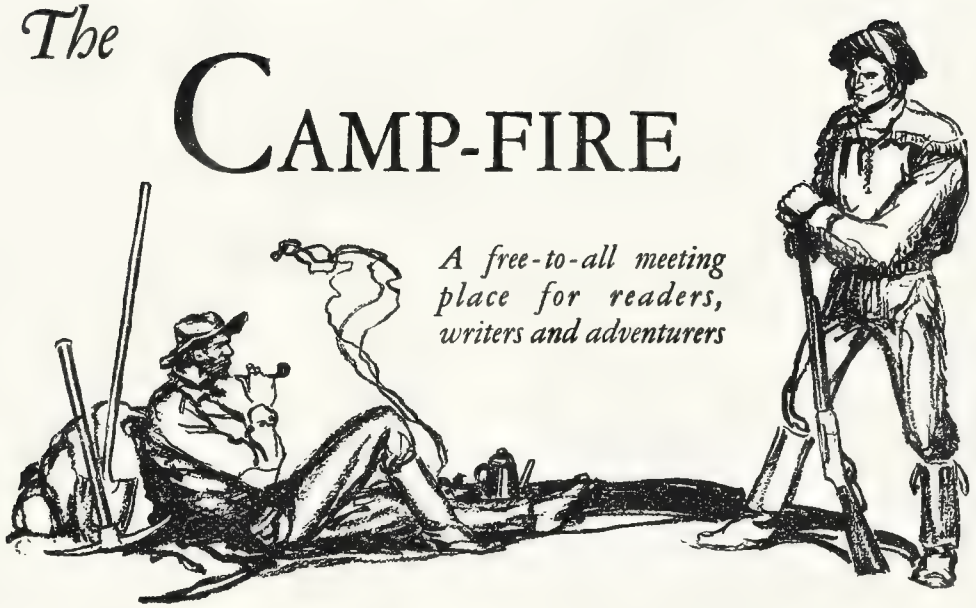
"And Von Honig?" asked the marshal of Germany.

"He has not returned," said the aide.

The close cropped gray head nodded thoughtfully. The eyes continued to look out the window.

In a tangle of wreckage, on a spot of war furrowed ground, flame swept and still forever, was Karl Von Honig—he who had gained the defeat.

The CAMP-FIRE



A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

The Readers' Vote

SORRY—but because of the flu epidemic, and the perfectly splendid response to our annual vote on stories, our tabulation is not finished. I'll have it ready for Camp-Fire of our next number, March fifteenth.

Meet Paul Neumann!

TO ACCOMPANY his extraordinary tale, "Kaliho," appearing in this issue—his first in *Adventure*—Comrade Neumann tells of his adventurous life. How greatly I envy a man who was admitted to personal friendship with the great R. L. S.!

The dispatch of this missive carries out intentions formed no less than sixteen years ago, when Jay Cairns, Fred Franklin, and a couple of additional nondescript kindred spirits from any and every old place, formed the Adventurers' Club of Chicago in the old Press Club.

In other words I have, since then, been intending to submit to you a few of my own adventures, but, somehow, in wandering over this world of ours, have not had time. Or, when I did, I found the kindred spirits' hospitality so powerful that somehow or other it did not just blend with attempting to write up to the standard of the magazine.

Under separate cover I am enclosing you the story that sent Robert Louis Stevenson to investigate the leper settlement at Molokai in the spring of 1889, when I was ten years old and the boy satellite of the tale teller.

This yarn, to the best of my belief, has never been told outside of Hawaii, or, if it has, nobody has as yet published it. It's based on fact. Douglas St. G. Walters, M. D., of Waimea, Kauai, now, I believe, deceased, told it to me when I was nine and James Dowsett told it to Robert Louis while he was living with my father at Sans Souci, Waikiki, on his first visit to the islands.

There was another true leper story of that time, which, much later, I gave to the late Jack London and which he brought up to date and published under the title Koolau, The Leper. It has nothing to do with the one I am sending you.

Last year, in my recurrent wandering fit, I was in the South Seas again and did a pilgrimage to Apia and Mount Vaea to my old fetish's tomb. If, after reading the story of Kaliho, you feel it justifies further contact with me, I would be glad to send you in a description of things as they are on the Apian way.

As bona fides of my good faith in this matter I am enclosing a clipping from *Editor and Publisher* about myself, and wish to add the following:

I was born on May 7, 1879, at 1314 Bush Street, San Francisco. My mother's maternal ancestors were those D'Almeidas, after whom the city and county of Alameda, Cal., are named. The first of these gentlemen was the famous Don Francisco, who fought Zulus before Drake started around the world. Subsequently the family ran the Acapulco—Manila galleons during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. My grandmother was born at Acapulco and moved from there to Monterey, Cal.,

early in the last century. There she met the descendant of another American pioneer family and married him.

This man was Herman Dincklagen, descendant of Lubbardus Van Dincklagen, the old boy who chased Peter Stuyvesant up the street, peg leg and all. Subsequently Peter chased him over to this island (Staten) where he lived for a while on the identical spot now occupied by this apartment.

My dad's family helped in the upbuilding of California in a modest way. My Uncle Emanuel founded the Alaska Commercial Company. My Cousin Rudolf made the gold discovery at Unga that became the Apollo Consolidated mining company, and was killed in 1897 by falling down a shaft.

Dad himself was one of the charter members of the Bohemian club; counsel for the Spreckels interests; subsequently attorney general for Kalakaua and Liliokalani, king and queen, in sequence, of Hawaii.

He dug Robert Louis Stevenson out of a San Francisco boarding house at 608 Bush Street, where the lonely Scot was sadly in need of medical attention, back in 1881 or thereabouts. The exact date I have in some memoirs around the house somewhere.

Anyhow, Stevenson was patched up. Sam Osbourne, with whose wife Stevenson was madly in love—Fanny Van De Grift was the lady's maiden name—happened to be my father's best friend. Likewise Stevenson became very nearly ditto. You can imagine the delicate situation my dad found himself in when Stevenson asked him to act as intermediary and inform Sam how matters stood. Anyhow, due to Dad, Sam retired from the scene and my father was Stevenson's best man, chief witness or what-have-you at the subsequent wedding.

Stevenson and his wife came to us in Honolulu in 1889. Then Dad with the aid of John Sumner of Apia, and a realtor there bought the Villa Vailima for Robert Louis. Louis paid a visit to our Honolulu home in 1894 and returned to Villa Vailima to die. During his first visit to the islands I was his interpreter—at the age of ten or rather nine years and nine months. He got the Bottle Imp story through my friendship with a Kahuna Lapaau, a Hawaiian medicine-man historian.

Well, that accounts for my knowledge of Stevenson, coupled with the fact that I have wandered over the lower Pacific groups probably more than any white man who ever returned to civilization. Also I followed up Stevenson's history while I took a course in science and Scottish hospitality at the University of Edinburgh in 1897, '98 and '99.

This is getting to be a devilishly long letter, but, I take it, you want to know by what right I submit anything to a magazine of your standing; and there you have it.

To go on for a few lines further. I was in the Boer war in 1900 and 1901. My number was 1316 [illegible], my rank private and my unit the Eighteenth Brigade Bearer Corps. Subsequently I foot-slogged it up and down the Eastern Free State as a member of the hungry Eighth Division. Fred Franklin during this period was running the police of Johannesburg quite effectively, and a bunch of other adventurers were scattered about the place doing any old thing that came handy.

In the summer of 1902 I tried my hand at a shot or two in Southeast Africa and had previously, during the summer vacations of '97, '98 and '99, shot the chamois on Mont Perdu and Maladetta slopes, and the agile ibex in Corsica.

I went to the South Seas on another of my runarounds late in 1902, and in 1903 found myself in Winnipeg minus a job or anything particular to do so I went with Survey Party No. 1 under an engineer called Ord on that section of the Grand Trunk Pacific—now the Canadian National—that begins at Superior Junction near Lac Seul and ends, or should end, at the junction of the Winnipeg and English Rivers. I managed to plunge into the shallows at Twenty Mile Rapids on the Wabigoon River early in 1904 and was thawed out at Eagle River by a squaw who lamented the terrible waste of alcohol used to get my toes moving.

Subsequently I wandered north to Great Bear. Then I came to New York and got a job on the old *Evening Sun* under McCloy who is now working on the *Evening Post.*

The rest of my career, with lapses now and then that carried me to Europe, Asia and Australia, is one of newspaper jobs, sprees around Java, dashes to Lower California, Oceania and once to Ireland. In 1916 I got downright mad at the Germans, despite far back descent from those good people, and enlisted in the Canadian Army. Number there was 528696. Some one discovered I knew something about medicine and first aid work in the field and I was shunted into the Second Field Ambulance. I came out of the big affair in October 1918, having done nothing in particular beyond "medical-sergeanting" a few companies of Forestry Corps troops and escorting better men than myself from Etaples, or rather from Westenhanger in England, to Baillieux (I do hope I have spelled that railhead right) and bidding them farewell as they made for the communicating spruits.

Well, there you have it! In other words I am an applicant for a job, telling yarns of adventure personally experienced. There may be some stretchers in them, but on the whole they're pretty accurate.

—PAUL NEUMANN

Captain Dingle Protests

WRECKED in the last bad storm which swept the Caribbean—losing his schooner and nearly all else except his life—this well known member of our writers' brigade, finds time to tell other comrades some interesting facts concerning Old Stiff, and also to say a word for the old sailing ships of British registry.

Dear Camp-Firers:

I'd like just to have read Shipmate Johnson's letter regarding the Not So Terrible Horn and let it go; but some things he gives expression to scarcely agree with my own experience; they won't merely get a rise out of Bill Adams, but out of most men who know Old Stiff well.

That the Horn may be passed easily and with comfort any sailor knows; but since readers of sea fiction want plenty of salt, writers usually choose an aspect of Cape Horn showing what it *can* do at its worst. I have rounded the Horn many times, both as a boy, as a mate, and as master of square-rigged vessels. I have come around with royals set more than once; by that same token I have been forty-three days jammed off the Horn in a fine British iron ship of three thousand tons which was rigged and handled as well as any American ship that ever sailed the seas. Captain Yardley Powles, almost a lifetime in command of the big British fourmasted barque *John Kerr*, rounded the Horn a score of times and never parted a ropeyarn. Other masters in other ships, particularly in the grain or nitrate trades, saw little but evil weather down at the Corner, and the iron and steel ships built in the 'eighties and 'nineties in Great Britain were rigged as no wooden vessel could ever be rigged. As for most of the tall tales being due to English ships not being sailed as well as American ships, in the five square riggers I sailed in I never saw their times bettered by any American ship encountered; and in the number of ships actually wrecked off Cape Stiff, the proportion of American ships lost to number under the flag at that point is just a little bit greater than that of British ships.

Cape Horn weather is as you find it. And though the seas off Cape Agulhas or the Cape of Good Hope can be heavier by far than those anywhere else on earth—at least that has been my experience—yet for sheer protracted bitterness I believe Old Stiff stands alone.

Friend Johnson cannot be very well acquainted with the performances of ships of other flags, or he surely would hesitate before making such a statement as: "The English ships—not so well kept up—and unless they had a Nova Scotia captain not driven as hard."

There were a few splendid ships of American register which had a famous reputation for smartness and upkeep. The general run of them were not a bit better kept or run than the general average of British ships. Many of them looked exactly what they were: soft wood, short-lived craft with the wracked lines of poor timber and hurried workmanship. None of them in their best days compared more than moderately well with the smartest of the British tea and wool ships. And few of the British record makers had any but English or Scottish masters. Some of the more famous of American built ships made their records under the British flag with British skippers and crews. Except for the North Atlantic record, American ships held few if any which were open to other flags: New York to Frisco was an easy record to make and hold, since only American ships could enter the trade.

But I hadn't any notion of swinging off on this tack, lads. I just want to put in a modest word in contradiction of a mistaken idea which Shipmate Johnson seems to have. And if it were necessary to disprove that notion about American ships being superiorly rigged or kept up, why, I suggest that anybody interested just collect the names of all the surviving sailing ships—square riggers—afloat under any flag, and see in Lloyds' Shipping Register how many are American built, how many British.

There is not one remaining under the British flag, or at least only one, if the sale has not yet been completed. I'm not sure how many there are under the American flag; several I think; but there are many under Finnish, Portuguese, Swedish, German and French flags, and seven-tenths or more including the American ships are British built, most of them pretty old—forty years or so. As for German ships, I can find no records of American vessels ever approaching the performances of the modern German sailing ships; certainly no American ship—or British either—was rigged or fitted as conveniently or powerfully as they.

I'd better clew-up. I hear Bill Adams clumping along to take his trick.

Fair winds and no sleet for your next passage, Shipmate Johnson. I've just been wrecked in the September hurricane in the Bahamas. Luck to you, boys.

—DINGLE, Mangrove Cay, Andros Island, Bahamas.

The Professor Takes A Ride

Gently there, now Buckshot, gently!
(What a name for an equine.)
Good horse, nice horse; walk now, horsey:
Ah! that's better. This is fine!

It was quite a generous spirit
That young cattle-puncher showed,
Loaning me his silver rowels——
Buckshot! Please stay in the road!

Let me think . . . His name is—"Slender"?
No-o . . . Ah! Now I have it—"Slim"!
Quite an interesting creature,
Though his intellect is dim.

Yet, he went to much exertion,
To secure this special mount
For my ride into the village——
Buckshot! Cease! ! Quick, let me count!

One—two—three—now! Foolish pony,
I shall punish you indeed,

With these sharp spurs for your prancing—
Help! Come quick! *Desist,* foul steed!

Oh! This ignominious moment!
Ah! These sandspurs in my head!
I fulfilled Slim's kind instructions
Most exactly, for he said

"Now, Perfesser, if he prances,
Which is liarble as sin;
Use them spurs the way I told yer:
Just count three an' jab 'em in!"

Word for word, that was his language,
And I cannot understand
How I was precipitated
Head-first off into the sand!

For I followed his suggestions
To the letter, pressing strong
To the horse's flanks the rowels;
But, perchance, my style was wrong.

Now that Buckshot beast has vanished:
Well, I really do not care.
I shall walk and find employment
Plucking sandspurs from my hair,

Which I could not do a-saddle,
For perforce I grasp the horn
Most tenaciously, or suffer
From a painful, misplaced corn.

I must haste, too, and assure Slim
That despite this, I'm all right,
Able to attend the snipe-hunt
He's to take me on tonight!

—COURTNEY McCURDY

Tristan Da Cunha

JANUARY twenty-second, 1929, the gifts from *Adventure's* readers and editors leave New York, on board the *Duchess of Atholl,* bound to that lonely island. They go in care of Mr. Robert Glass, whose letter was published some months ago in Camp-Fire.

With the money received merchandise has been purchased—since currency is of no use to the islanders.

Back Copies

COMRADE C. R. Rollings of Port Huron, Michigan, wishes to dispose of a file from July, 1924, complete to date, and some 1913 copies. He says:

"Will sell entire lot, but not separate copies. Offer should include freight from Port Huron."

The Kodiak

WRITING from Juneau, Alaska, Brother Haines has a word to say concerning the depredations of this largest of North American animals.

In the November issue of *Adventure* Magazine I noted with interest the comments by Mr. Victor Shaw, of Loring, Alaska, relative to the Kodiak brown bear. Mr. Shaw knows whereof he speaks. He spoke of the depredations of the brownies, and of the public sentiment that is aroused at this time over the damage caused by the brutes among the cattle herds on the islands to the Westward.

It may be of interest to the readers of *Adventure* Magazine to know that a great number of people living on islands of the Kodiak-Afognak group petitioned the Alaska Game Commission at its annual fall session this year to make changes in the present bear protective law that would enable the ranchers to protect their livestock against the ravages of the animal. To be sure, the browns do considerable damage among the small sheep and cattle herds of the islands, and in more than one they have been known to have attacked humans, unprovoked, and done away with them. Ex-Gov. Riggs of the Territory, during his term of office, gathered a great deal of accurate data concerning quite a large number of people who lost their lives to the brown bear.

I, as a sportsman, am not in favor of a law that would allow the unrestricted killing of the largest American carnivora. If such a thing were to be brought about, I believe that the Kodiak brown bear would go the way of many other species of American wild life, that is now extinct: the buffalo and carrier pigeon, for instance. I believe that there are other measures other than unrestricted killing that, if put into effect, would protect the settlers and their herds without jeopardizing the future of this particular animal life.

Mrs. Haines and myself are ardent readers of *Adventure.* This past summer we made a 4,000 mile cruise up the north Pacific coast, from Seattle to Juneau, Alaska, in a sixteen foot open boat. We enjoyed a wonderful time for three months, but we missed about four issues of our favorite magazine and it sure hurt.

We are both keenly interested in the fine new series that are being run; and I am eager to read of

Ben Quorn's adventures in India, next month. That character sure leads an eventful life.

—R. L. HAINES

The Lineman's Rag

He don't know comfort an' he don't know joy—
Just a little too mad for the gods to destroy—
An' the saddest sight ye ever saw
Is a cold cigaret in a lineman's jaw,
"Whaddye say if I take another chaw—
The last one I took was a damn poor draw."

Out in the alley to hang up a "bug".
Hands get cold an' ye lose every lug.
Oh, the hardest sight ye ever saw
Is a lineman biffing a frozen paw.
"Whaddye say if I take another chaw—
The one 'fore this slid down my craw."

If it ain't no trick to phase out a job,
(Don't call for thinkin' or usin' the knob)
As piteous a sight as ye ever saw
Is a lineman definin' the ohmic law.
"Whaddye say if I take another chaw—
Last chew I had was beddin' straw."

It's a tough ol' life an' plumb full o' grief;
If ye don't use care it's doggone brief.
The toughest sight ye ever saw
Is a lineman dead on the devil's claw.
"Whaddye say if I take another chaw—
I've seen hard times since I left maw."

—CLARENCE SWANSON

"Hexed!"

AT YORK, in the supposedly enlightened State of Pennsylvania, a "jury of his peers" (!) just has sentenced to life imprisonment, a fourteen year old boy, for murder. This lad, not yet out of the eighth grade of grammar school, was taught to believe in witchcraft—thought himself and his family "hexed". (Note: the German word for witch is "*Hexe*".)

Seems to me this country has a law enforcement complex, and one which often buries its teeth in the worst possible places and victims. For possessing a pint of moonshine liquor (the fourth of such offenses), another youth gets life. An ignorant Italian woman, who probably never really understood that "now we got Pro'beesh", catches the same breath-taking penalty. Her fourth offense, selling "red ink".

A street was torn up, being repaired or re-sewered, in a certain Chicago suburb. The town was unfamiliar to me, the street lamps were out, and I was driving a big car. I crept along at ten miles an hour—was pinched and fined, because my headlights were too bright.

Since returning to New York (and I am no native New Yorker, either) I noted with something akin to satisfaction that the particular dark street on which I had been arrested, had been the scene of a spectacular machine gun murder!

No, they haven't made any arrests, at the time of this writing. Probably they won't. It's not so easy to pinch a "Tommy man" as it is to stop a presumably decent citizen who is forced to drive slowly on an unpaved street—or as it is to convict a scared grammar school kid, without money, who still probably believes in the justice and majesty of the law.

—ANTHONY M. RUD.

ASK *Adventure*

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Ordnance

THE USE of field artillery in the Spanish-American War; in the Russo-Japanese War. Early machine guns.

Request:—"Perhaps these questions don't belong in your department, but would be grateful if you can answer them.

1. What type of field artillery was used by both U. S. and Spanish armies in the Spanish-American War?

2. Were machine guns used?

3. Was the Gatling rapid-firer any good?

4. What type of field artillery was used by the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War?

5. What kind of machine guns did they use?

6. Did the Japanese have a gun similar to the French '75,' used in the World War?"

—H. E. ALVIS, Decatur, Ill.

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—1. Field artillery played a minor part in the Spanish-American War, and such as was used was even then out of date. In the Santiago campaign in Cuba, for example, the American Army had less than a score (16 I think) field artillery pieces. These were 3.2 inch breech loading rifled steel field guns, using black powder. We also had in Cuba a small siege train consisting of some 3.6 inch and 5 inch rifled guns and 7 inch howitzers. But I can find no record that these guns were ever used in action. In the Philippines we used the 3.2 field gun and a few 2.95 mountain howitzers purchased in England.

The Spanish army was worse off than ours, however. Their only artillery in Cuba consisted of two or three mountain guns, some seacoast defense guns and a few naval guns mounted for use on land.

Both the American and the Spanish guns in Cuba were of old type already rendered obsolete by the new quick-firing guns using smokeless powder which were coming into use in the better equipped European armies.

2. Two forerunners of the modern machine gun were used by American troops in the Spanish-American War. One of these, the Gatling gun, came down from the Civil War, while the other, the Colt Automatic Rapid-fire Gun, was a more modern product. Both guns gave a good account of themselves in action.

3. For its day, the Gatling gun was an effective weapon. Like many innovations it failed to win the confidence of the Army, but the work which a battery of these guns did in Cuba influenced many of the more far-seeing military men to give serious consideration to the machine gun idea.

4. In the war with Russia, Japan used a 2.95 caliber breech loading gun of old type (no recoil apparatus), but employing smokeless powder. The range of the field gun was about 5,000 yards; of the mountain guns a little less. They also used a 4.72 howitzer as corps artillery.

5. Japan had a few Hotchkiss machine guns at the beginning of the war with Russia and added to her supply as rapidly as possible. The Hotchkiss, as you probably know, is a gas operated, air-cooled weapon.

6. There is some similarity between the Arisika gun with which Japan was armed in the Russo-Japanese War and the modern French "75." The caliber is the same—2.95 inches or 75 millimeters. The Japanese gun had a muzzle velocity of 1,600 feet per second and a range of 5,000 yards for a shell about 13 pounds in weight. The French "75" has a muzzle velocity of 1,805 feet per second, a range of nearly 7,000 yards and uses a 12-pound shell. There is a great difference in the speed with which the French "75" can be handled as compared with the Japanese gun of Russian War date. The French gun is much more effective. Japan has also improved her gun along the same lines as the modern French "75."

Panama

THE possibilities in a large plantation in this rich Zone territory are beyond a man's wildest dreams; here practically anything that grows anywhere in the world can be raised within the radius of ten miles.

Request:—"What do you think of Panama as a field for American business enterprise? Have you any suggestions as to the best possibilities?"

—R. P. M., Toledo, Ohio.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—I think that Panama is a fine bet. It does not have the great failing of many Latin American countries, lack of protection. An American can get better protection down there, through the Zone authorities, than he can get in the U.S. And, besides, the Panama people are very friendly and one has no trouble with them as they are used to us. One thing against them is their infernal laziness. The U. S. Government and United Fruit solved the thing by importing blacks from the West Indies who work cheap and are easy to handle. I imagine there were not more than 100 Panamanians who worked on the Canal at a total from the time it was started. They are good at what they understand, such as cattle herding, horse and mule raising, running stuff in canoes and such things. West Indians who have been imported directly from the islands are better workers than the others, and by keeping them some distance from the Zone they will stick. The best of them get $1. per day and board themselves, and I have no doubt hundreds could be brought over who would work for 50 cents (our money) per day. They are much more docile than American blacks and they speak English so a man can handle them easily.

While I was on the Zone I made experiments with fibre plants. There are good fibre plants growing wild that make better rope than sisal. I think these plants could be cultivated. There are also various vegetable-oil nuts and seeds which only requires a small plant to press out. I went to see such a plant at Blue Point, Long Island, which was importing sesame seed from China and they were selling every drop of oil at the same price obtained for good olive oil. There are some forty or fifty better fruits than bananas that grow under native cultivation in Panama and I will state without fear of contradiction that the Panama pineapple is 100% better than the Hawaiian product and grows much larger.

I know that rubber will grow within 20 miles of the canal for I know a locomotive engineer who has a small plantation that near and I went over to see it. I have forgotten his initials but his name was Nevill. He was raising corn, yams, black pepper, bananas, coffee, chocolate, beans, and various other things. By planting along the slopes of the hills and mountains it is possible to grow anything in the whole world within a radius of 10 miles. Such is the peculiar suitability of the Country for agriculture.

The best portion of Panama is the portion this side of the canal. This side means west, for the republic runs east and west. The portion this way from the canal is 200 miles long and varies from 240 to 46 miles wide and you can count the local farms on your fingers. The Panama native goes out with a machete and cuts his living from the woods or fishes it out of the streams. All he wants is a thatched shack and a hammock plus a cayuka to glide over the streams on to sell a bunch of bananas once in a while for a few dimes. There are but a very few cattle on the immense prairie that starts near Chorrerra (22 miles from Empire).

The best farming land is cleared jungle and by getting wild jungle land bordering on the prairie a combination ranching-cattle raising layout could be started. In my time in Panama the price of government land bordering the Canal Zone was 10 cents per acre plus cost of surveying with no limit on what a man could get. I can show you better land at this price than you can see in California or Florida, and by letting me get up 1,500 feet in the hills I can show you perpetual spring. There is plenty of game, including deer, wild turkey (curassow), tapirs, and plenty of fowl and fish. There is a lot of mahogany left but there are also 84 other hardwoods that have never been developed. I know a man who went into the jungle and cut blocks of wood to cure and dress, and some of them are as good as mahogany. There are a score of them that could be used as cabinet woods and airplane propeller woods, besides various other purposes.

PANAMA would be ideal for planting drug plants that bring high prices per pound for leaves or roots. I have no doubt that Brazilian tree tea would grow there if introduced. Panama hat fibre always sells at a good price; ivory nuts are worth real money in New York.

The possibilities of any large plantation are beyond a man's wildest dreams. One has but to look at what the English have done in the Malay States to see what could be done, for Panama is 100 per cent. more rich and has a better climate. 50,000 or 100,000 acres can be obtained at from $5,000 to $10,000 dollars direct from the local government, perhaps less by taking this quantity. There is plenty of water power. I know of a 40 foot fall near the Zone. This particular one is partly reserved by the Panama government, but there are many others. There are good harbors at various places along the coast which are only used by native sailing canoes.

During the construction of the canal several Americans went up the Pacific coast to David, near the Costa Rican border, and started raising coffee and cattle raising on a small scale. Later a number settled at Boquete near there. They have brought in several others and there is quite a colony of them now. This place can be reached from the Zone either by mule over a very poor road or by native sailing boat. That is where Lindbergh went while

in Panama. Between there and the Zone is 200 miles of undeveloped country, both prairie and jungle. Why I pick this instead of the country the other side of the canal is due to the friendliness of what few Indians there are. I walked down through this country without being troubled. The San Blas, beyond the canal, are not yet any too friendly and they keep to their own country and allow few to come in there.

Also I want to say that in picking any portion of western Panama, I have in mind that the precipitation is less and the climate better on the Pacific side than on the Atlantic. There is too much rain in certain portions of the Atlantic side but just over the backbone ridge it falls to about what is needed. The so-called rainy season in any portion of Panama does not stop a man from going about his business as the rain is warm and one gets used to it. It is the dry season when the cutting and burning is done on new land (cut in the wet and burned in the dry).

Here are a few suggested enterprises worth considering:

1. Domesticating tapirs and raising them for market or for zoos and circuses. The beef is better than cow meat or steer. They are very easily domesticated.

2. Poultry, including domesticating the wild turkey or curassow, which is larger than any turkey and is easily domesticated.

3. Drugs.

4. Pineapples on a large scale.

5. Experimental farm for the highest priced products raised anywhere in the world.

6. Silk.

7. Panama hat industry. The fibre grows there easily but the hats are made in Ecuador. The name is a misnomer.

8. Pearl fishing on the coast. Some of the best pearl in the world are found on the islands near Panama.

9. Lumbering.

10. Mining. I found colors on the Zone itself on the Gatuncillo.

11. Fruit growing for other things than the indigenous oranges, grapefruits, tree melons, etc. I have little doubt that the free stone and cling stone mango could be introduced here in the U. S. and other fruits that make your mouth water. There are plenty of coconuts.

12. Tannery, chocolate factory, furniture factory, packing plant for iced beef, trading stations for native products such as Hudson's Bay Co. has in Canada; shark oil factory combined with fertilizer works, cannery for local fruits, banana flour mill, distillery for fruit brandies, etc.

13. Health resort.

14. Snake farm for huge snakes which bring good money when sold.

15. All of which is in addition to such staple things as sugar cane growing, general farming, cattle raising, fruit growing, etc. which are being carried on in the haphazard fashion by natives.

Ju-Jutsu

OFFSETTING the effectiveness of bone and muscle by simple maneuvers.

Request;—"I wish you would give me information about ju-jutsu, this Japanese wrestling, or tell me where I can buy a book on it."

—E. C. CALL, Cleveland, Ohio.

Reply, by Mr. Oscar E. Riley:—Ju-jutsu has been described as the art of destroying an opponent's equilibrium, so that he may be thrown easily. If the opponent is very powerful, the force and momentum of his attack render his equilibrium unstable, and he can be thrown or tripped instantly by a weakling of coolness and skill.

Formerly the principles were a secret passed along from teacher to teacher. In the 1880's Professor J. Kano combined the three prevailing styles into one perfected system and opened an academy in Tokio which quickly became, and remained, the ju-jutsu center of Japan.

"Kano Ju-Jutsu," by Hancock and Higashi, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, contains more than 500 pages, with a separate illustration and lesson on each page. It costs $5. Ju-Jutsu Combat Tricks, by H. Irving Hancock, also published by Putnam's, is $1.75 and contains many illustrations. Your neighborhood book dealer can get either one for you.

Hunters' Island

NORTHWEST Ontario lake country unsurpassed for beauty.

Request:—"Last July three friends and myself made a vacation trip into the Basswood Lake region. We liked the country and scenery so well, not to say anything about the fishing, that we intend to go up into that country again next summer. Our main object is to get pictures and see the country, and on this trip we want to go around Hunters' Island, if the trip can be made by three people in about seventeen days. We are planning to build a light flat bottomed boat about 12 feet long, about 52 inches wide and about 16 inches deep, and not to weigh over 100 lbs. This is to be pushed along by a single cylinder outboard motor. Would this kind of a boat be O.K. for the trip, considering the number of portages? We don't want to use canoes, as they weigh nearly as much as the boat and we would have to have two canoes to carry our stuff, and we think the canoes would not be as seaworthy as our boat.

I had some experience along that line last summer when we were marooned on an island near the mouth of the Basswood River for four days on account of high winds and waves. We want to be able to move during most any kind of weather, on account of our limited vacation period.

We passed the camp of a couple of professional

guides in the narrows of Pipestone Bay and they had a detail map of the district, put out by a firm in Duluth. We neglected to get the firm's name, and if you can get it for me it would help us a great deal. Any other information which you may think would be of use to us would be very thankfully received."

—N. H. JOHANN, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. T. F. Phillips:—In reply to your letter in regard to a canoe trip around Hunters' Island, permit me to say that you have picked a country that is unsurpassed in beauty and scenery. I have made this trip sixteen times and I have certainly never tired of it.

In going out of Basswood Lake you take the eastern route and go up the Knife Lake region into Saganaga, turning here to the west and going down into what the Canadian Rangers call the Sturgeon River. You will find the portages here very rough, but you will be repaid by seeing some fine waterfalls. This will take you in to Lake Kahnipae. At this point, should you care to shorten your trip, you could come south through Lake Agnes and back to Basswood Lake. Otherwise, at this point you could continue west and then southwest down the Magligne. You will find some fine stretches of rapids at these points.

Reaching the LaCroix Lake, you would turn east and come up through Crooked Lake and finally into the Basswood River which leads back to Basswood Lake then into Winton. The reason I am telling you to go this route is that you are going downstream excepting in the Basswood River where none of the rapids are very swift. I generally make this trip comfortably in about ten to twelve days depending upon weather conditions. Of course, if you have no guide you would have to allow a few more days because you are sure to become lost at times, which will require a few hours to get on the right course.

In regard to the flat bottomed boat that you expect to build. It may be all right. I am afraid it would be very cumbersome on the rough portages to the north of Hunters' Island. My advice would be to take an eighteen foot canoe and paddle rather than carry an outboard motor and gasoline. I have been making the trip in a seventeen foot canoe with three persons and baggage and we did not find it too inconvenient. Of course, I am very partial to the canoe because that is the only boat that I have ever had anything to do with.

As to being windbound in these large lakes, about the only ones that you would need to have fear of would be Basswood, Saganaga and LaCroix. The other lakes are narrow and are protected by a very high shoreline. In the twenty years that I have been going into this country, I have only been windbound three times so your experience last summer was, I would say, unusual for you people, also I will have to admit that I have seen the Basswood with waves as large as those on Lake Superior. Of course, at those times, the safe and sensible thing to do is to stay ashore.

You can avoid a canoe through Basswood Lake by getting a launch at Winton that will take you to the eastern end of this lake. It, no doubt, would also save you a day of paddling. Then the next morning you would be ready to strike out into the wilderness. The Wilderness Outfitting Company at Ely or Mr. Russell, the postmaster at Winton, could furnish you the canoes and provisions. Both companies will put said provisions in cloth sacks at a very nominal charge. I am enclosing in this letter a key map which will give you some idea of the map or maps you would have on this trip. I have also traced in ink the route and direction you would follow. If I can give you any other information, I would be glad to do so. I assure you again that you have picked the choice of all canoe routes in this Hunters' Island District. In Lake Kahnipae would be a fine place for you to get moose pictures should you so desire. There are any number of inlets made into the swamps where the moose delights to feed. The fishing also is excellent.

Platino

IN OTHER words, the common banana. "The Banana Father" and his peculiar accomplishment.

Request:—"When were bananas first shipped to the U. S. from Central America? Can they be grown commercially in California, to your knowledge? Are there any being grown there now?"

—JOSEPH GRIMES, Palatka, Fla.

Reply, by Mr. Charles Bell Emerson:—The first bananas shipped to the United States for use as food were sent by Count F. S. Reisenberg, now a naturalized American citizen. Count Reisenberg is first cousin to Kaiser William, the ex-Emperor, and a nephew of Otto von Bismark, the "Iron Chancellor."

Count Reisenberg started for the United States on a sailing vessel, with the intention of raising hogs on a grand scale, but was blown ashore on to the coast of Costa Rica, and while there experimenting with the hog idea, he discovered that the *platino* (usually called bananas in U.S.A.) was fit for human use as well as for feeding his swine; this was a great surprise, even to the natives who up to that time, had regarded this fruit as a possible poison and had not experimented with it as an article of food.

The Count, carrying out the idea of creating a market for this new kind of fruit for the masses in the United States, made his first shipment about 1870.

The vessel landed safely at New Orleans, La., where the cargo of "bananas" was promptly condemned by the knowing ones in authority, and he was forced to cart the whole cargo out of the city and bury it; the reason being that the authorities believed that the bananas were carriers of yellow fever, therefore not fit for human food.

But the Count persisted, and later sent small boxes by captains and pursers of different vessels to various acquaintances in the U.S.A. until he finally managed to get a number of people interested, so that they finally helped him to carry out the idea to the utmost extent, so that today we see them in all markets. In Costa Rica he is spoken of as "The Banana Father." Thus by persistent industry, he finally got the banana introduced into the United States as an article of food.

Fifty years ago the banana was as little known in the United States as the alligator pear is today, but within the memory of three generations the imports of this fruit have grown from nothing to over 50,000,000 bunches, of the value of about $15,000,000 wholesale.

Captain Baker, of Cape Cod, brought a few bunches to New York in 1870.

Flying Cadets

A SPLENDID training for the young man who wishes to make aviation his career.

Request:—"1. Where does one enter the Army Aviation School?

2. Where does one complete the course?

3. What preparation is needed?

4. Is there any charge for instruction?

5. Does such a course lead to a commission?

6. What are one's relations with the Army?

7. Do you think there is a future in aviation? I have one more year of High School to complete.

8. Would you advise a young man to enter?"

—BOB DENHARDT, Red Bluff, Cal.

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—I assume that you refer to the course for Flying Cadets.

1. The primary flying schools where Flying Cadets receive their first training are at Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas, and at March Field, Riverside, California.

2. The advanced school is at Kelly Field, at San Antonio. These are the heavier-than-air, (airplane) schools. The lighter-than-air (balloon) schools are at Scot Field, Belleville, Illinois.

3. An education equivalent to two years of college is required for appointment as a Flying Cadet.

4. There is no charge for instruction. Instead, flying cadets are paid $75.00 per month, are furnished quarters, clothing and equipment by the Government and receive an allowance of $1.00 per day for board.

5. All flying cadets who successfully complete the course are commissioned 2nd Lieutenants in the Air Corps Reserve. There is also an opportunity for a limited number to be commissioned in the Regular Army.

6. Reserve Officers are eligible for an annual period of training but are not subject to be called to duty in time of peace against their wishes. They are subject to call in time of war. Either a regular or reserve officer may tender his resignation at any time and it is always accepted except in time of war or other unusual circumstances. There is no restriction as to the occupation of officers of the Reserve Corps.

7. There is, I think, every indication that aviation will grow tremendously during the next four or five years with a consequent increased demand for air trained men. It is probable, although I have no official information, that the educational requirements for appointment as Flying Cadet will be raised within a year of two, from two years of college to four full years of academic work.

8. I think that an appointment as Flying Cadet opens up a wonderful opportunity to a young man interested in aviation. It is splendid training whether he intends to follow a military career or take up civil aviation.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard small launch river and lake tripping and cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, Copeland Manor, Libertyville. Illinois.

Yachting HENRY W. RUBINKAM, Chicago Yacht Club, Box 507, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Boating GEORGE W. SUTTON, 232 Madison Ave., Room 801, New York City.

Motor Camping JOHN D. LONG, 610 W. 116th St., New York City.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and Traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

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Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 429 Wilson Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Health hazard of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb.

Camping and Woodcraft HORACE KEPHART, Bryson City, N. C.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect; how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry in the United States *Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Haitian Agricultural Corporation, Cap-Haitien, Haiti.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 231 Eleventh St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps LIEUT. F. W. HOPKINS, Marine Corps Fleet Reserve, Box 1042, Medford, Oregon.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., 117 North Boulevard, Deland, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, c/o William H. Souls, 1481 Beacon St., Boston, Massachusetts.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.*—THOMAS H. DAMERON, 7 Block "S", Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Herpetology *General information concerning reptiles and amphibians; their customs, habits and distribution.*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.*—DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J.

Ichthyology GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Box 821, Calif.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition, history and psychology; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration, national development and descent (authorities and bibliographies).* (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues, their affinities and plans for their study.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, 345 W. 23rd St., New York City.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON, care of *Adventure.*

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball JOE F. CARR, 16 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "DANIEL," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing JAMES P. DAWSON, The New York *Times*, Times Square, New York City.

Fencing JOHN V. GROMBACH, 1061 Madison Ave., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apt. 1011, 2019 Eye Street N. W., Washington, D. C.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documented steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—HARRY E. RIESEBERG.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean* (*Siberian Waters*).—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*

South Sea Islands JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 4322 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa.** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

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Asia Part 2 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Via Box 335, Azusa, California.

✠**Africa Part 8** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, 14837 Grand River Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

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Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern. Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Popular Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.* JAS. F. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for Sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present conditions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"). 1805 Stroh Building, Detroit, Michigan.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

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Alaska. Also mountain climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 3009 Crest Trail, Hollywood, Calif.

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Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, Albuquerque, Box 445, New Mexico.

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Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Mina, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2003 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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Middle Western U. S. Part 2 *Mo. and Ark. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Especially wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

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Middle Western U. S. Part 4 *Mississippi River.* Also routes, connections, itineraries; river-steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions about working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears.—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa.

Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River, (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also seamanship, navigation, courses, distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. For all territory east of the Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1332, New Haven, Conn.

Eastern U. S. Part 4 *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 5 *Maryland and District of Columbia.* Also historical places.—LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 14 Hubbard Court, Charleston, West Virginia.

Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C. Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling, saws.—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 7 *Appalachian Mountain south of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The next issue of
ADVENTURE
March 15th

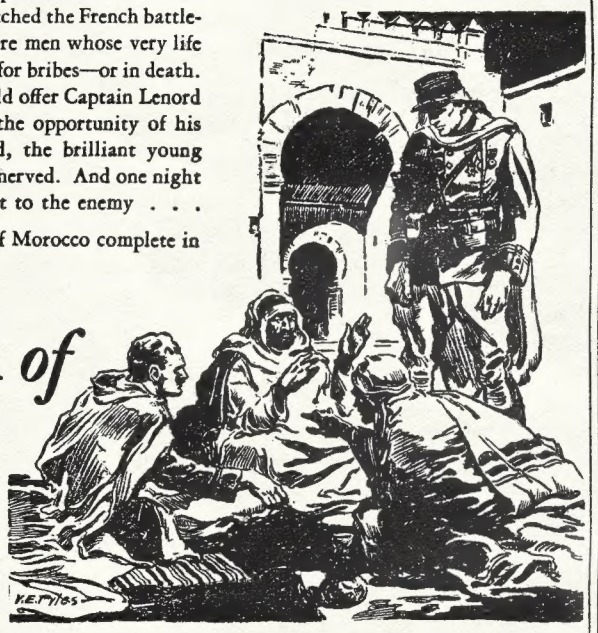
OUT BEYOND the grim desert pass called "The Door of Fear", the Berber enemy watched the French battlements. Restlessly, for they were men whose very life was fighting, who granted peace only for bribes—or in death. Battle was inevitable, and battle would offer Captain Lenord commander of the Legion garrison, the opportunity of his career. Yet as the time approached, the brilliant young officer grew visibly more and more unnerved. And one night he paid one of his own men to desert to the enemy . . .

You will find this thrilling novel of Morocco complete in the March 15th issue.

The DOOR *of* FEAR

by

GEORGES SURDEZ



Two Unusual Novelettes

THIN ROPE

A mystery story of the Red Cañon Country

By HAL FIELD LESLIE

A WHITE MAN NEVER STEALS

An elemental tale of the South African veldt

By FERDINAND BERTHOUD

And—Other Good Stories

THE PRODIGIOUS DELEHANTY, a rugged story of the Oregon pine country, by JAMES STEVENS; RULE G, a tale of railroading in the Ozarks, by E. S. DELLINGER; LUCK, a story of the Great War, by PETER S. GRAY; THAT'S BUSINESS, a story of South Sea treasure, by CLEMENTS RIPLEY; BLACK YANKEE, a story of a fancy-dress Mexican, by BARRY SCOBEE; and Part Two of THE RED DEVIL FROM SUN DOG, a stirring novel of the Texas border, by W. C. TUTTLE.

who is the victim? who the murderer?

can *You* solve this mystery in a mystery

Is it Anita?

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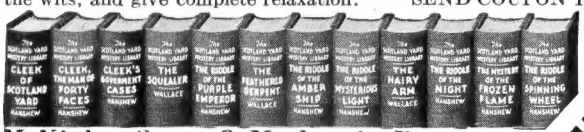
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